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INTERMARRIAGE

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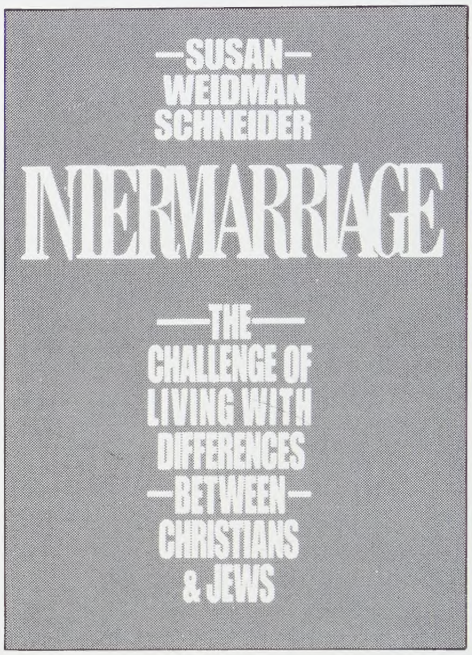

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"Schneider's deft interweaving of the research literature with astute observations drawn from her own interviews should make this book high-priority reading for couples who are on the threshold of intermarriage."
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–Joseph Giordano, Director of the Center on Ethnicity, Behavior, and Communications, American Jewish Committee

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LILITH

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LILITH is named for the legendary predecessor of Eve who insisted on equality with Adam: *"After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, He created a woman, also from the earth, and called her 'Lilith.' Lilith said, "We are equal because we both come from the earth."* (from *The Alphabet of Ben Sira, 23a-b)*

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FROM THE EDITOR

In the Jewish calendar, autumn is the official time of self-evaluation.

For me, the stock-taking increasingly revolves around the question of transitions, personal and political: One child leaving for a more distant college than before, another deciding where to depart for next year, shifts in relationships with older generations of the family, new kinds of work and challenges as LILITH broadens its coverage to grow beyond the narrower spectrum of issues the magazine addressed at its inception 14 years ago.

About leave-taking: My own grandmother left her little town near Zhitomer when she was about 19, in 1904. She was going to Canada alone, on a ticket sent to her by her betrothed, my grandfather (a man her family disapproved of). The part of the story I remember best from my mother's retelling is that Bronya's tearful farewell to her family included embracing the plum tree that grew in her yard.

My sweet-faced, silver-haired *bobbe*, who taught me to play "casino" and to gamble with a special ivory *dreidl* that she'd brought with her from the Old Country, was, according to her only child, a mystic who interpreted dreams and could read tea leaves, palms and people's faces. What was she seeing about her own future when she embraced a plant?

My *bobbe's* willingness to make change, to change her whole life, to leave her parents and sisters and brother and plum tree for an unknown place half a world away, is different only in degree from the risks taken by any departing child, any woman transforming her life. Her acknowledgement of the pain involved, hugging the plum tree, which like her parents would not make it to the New World – yet leaving anyway – has always seemed to me to be the message. You acknowledge the past and move on.

How does this emblematic tale connect to this time and the transitions in my own life? My *bobbe's* certainty that things would be better is a notion I feel I have to reinforce in myself every day: that there is an asymmetry to the arrow of time, that we're making progress, that our departures will indeed bring us to better destinations.

The hallmark for women today, if we're honest in this season of self-evaluation, seems to be a humbling uncertainty. The declarative nature of our ideologies ten or fifteen or twenty years ago – that we were certain we could transform the world, or at least repair it – has led many of us to a quieter desire to explore some subtler implications of our choices.

Two illustrations will suggest to you why I feel this way. My daughter Rachel sent me a postcard from Israel featuring a woman in traditional, long Middle Eastern dress, her entire head almost obscured by the huge bundle of twigs she was carrying on it. The photo caption: "Women's Lib." And my son reports that many of his college-age women friends, themselves having been raised in daycare, are uncertain that they want to be as absent from their offspring as their own parents were.

The clarity (even with its pain) that my grandmother felt when she moved into a world new in every sense feels absent today. We need to examine the ways in which we transmit the message about social and personal change. Let's hope that we can become as convinced again of progress and of our role in it as my beloved *bobbe* was when she unwound herself from that plum tree and moved on.

Susan

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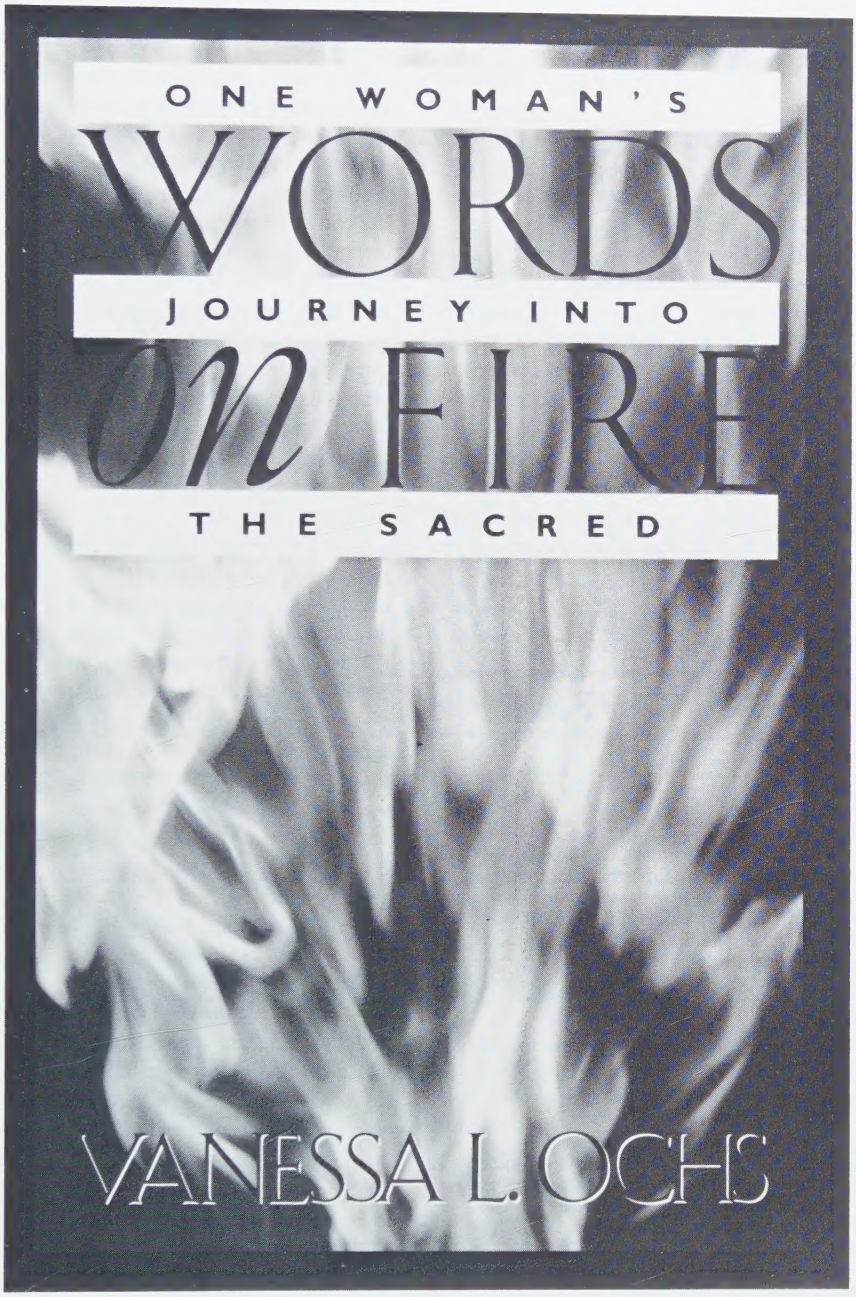

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ABORTION, NOT THE JEWISH WAY?

I would like to comment on your article "The Anti-Choice Movement: Bad News for Jews" [Summer 1990]. It is bad news for Jews such as yourself and other liberals who jump on the bandwagon of every ill cause there is in this world.

Jewish law on abortion posits that the life of the mother takes precedence over that of the unborn child in a *life threatening situation to the mother. Halacha* regards a fetus in God's image from the fortieth day onward within the womb. Torah affirms life. The right to life of the fetus in the womb.

You will tell me that national organizations such as NCJW or Hadassah take a pro-choice position. They too are led by uninformed people caught up by today's times and unaware of Judaism's positions on the issues.

People who are so involved in *protecting* religious freedom are doing just that. They are *protecting it* but not adhering to it. It's about time the so-called protectors practiced a little of that Judaism so that they may quote it correctly to a non-Jewish world.

Cantor Marvin Moskowitz
Syracuse NY

DOWN SYNDROME BABIES

Everyone at the Jewish Association for Residential Care for Persons With Developmental Disabilities was thrilled to see the article about Janet Marchese ["Finding Homes for Jewish Babies" Summer 1990]. It's especially important that information on the numbers of *Jewish* babies given up to non-Jewish homes was made public for the first time.

Marcy B. Feldman
Huntington Woods MI

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In her fourth collection of poetry, exiled Chilean poet Marjorie Agosin remembers the women of her country silenced by imprisonment, torture, and death whose voices, she says, "wake me up at night to ask me not to forget them."
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-Denise Levertov

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CREATING NEW RITUALS

A Midwife's Kaddish" and "The New, Improved Jewish Divorce" [Summer 1990], and their authors' courage in forging new traditions, spoke to my own situation.

Every year, for nineteen years, I have made a pilgrimage to the synagogue to say the mourners' prayer for my son who had died a violent death on the highways of California. And every year, December became a time of clashing emotions for me. All around me, Jews and Christians prepared for joyous celebrations. I, too, laughed, sang, baked and wrapped dozens of gifts. But then I also grieved and sighed. The conflict of these different emotions always left me feeling confused and out of step.

Last December, I left for the synagogue on Friday night as usual, but I ended up missing a turn-off and I found myself sitting for a few anxious moments all alone at the side of the road. Suddenly, the road to the synagogue seemed so dark. But the road behind me — back home — was bright and inviting, the lamps on the freeway shedding a luminous glow, no shadows, no gloomy darkness.

As if my hands were guided from without, I changed my lane and drove home again. With a new sense of peace and pleasure, I turned on bright lights in the house, lit the memorial candle in my son's honor, said the prayer, and began to remember all the good years he had shared with us. At that moment I decided to break Jewish tradition: to celebrate my son's memory in April (when he was born) instead of December. This last April I did just that, and after nineteen years, I finally felt in tune with my own desires.

Charlotte Krepismann
Los Altos CA

In altering a portion of Grace After Meals ["Bringing Feminism to Camp Ramah" Summer 1990], Hope Berger has inadvertently adopted a Christian view. Rewording the second blessing from *ve-al beritkha she-hatamta be-besareynu* to *ve-al beritkha she-hatamta be-lebeynu* causes the phrase to correspond perfectly to the Christian interpretation of circumcision based on *Romans* 2.29 in which circumcision of the heart replaces that of the body.

Perhaps Ms. Berger should follow the advice of Rabbi Moses Isserles in the *Shulhan Arukh (Orah Hayyim 187.3)* and simply not recite this phrase.

Edward Fram
Bronx NY

'JAP'-BAITING AT HARVARD

My senior thesis at Harvard College was entitled "The Jewish American Princess Stereotype: How Has it Become a Rationale for Prejudice and Discrimination Against Women?" I first decided to write about the JAP stereotype after listening to my friends' accounts of bias incidents that were occurring at their schools (Cornell and SUNY Albany). When I began my project I had no idea that this phenomenon which combined anti-Semitism and misogyny had been coined "JAP-baiting" until I stumbled upon the Fall 1987 issue of LILITH. At that point I realized that the stories I'd heard from my friends were not isolated incidents, but part of a much larger problem.

Initially I had been raising some eyebrows among both classmates and professors when I submitted my thesis proposal at the end of my junior year. My topic was considered "tolerable" as a junior project, but had been deemed illegitimate as a senior thesis. After a battle with the head tutor of the sociology department my topic was approved. Luckily, there was an article in *Newsweek* that week which cited your work and the breadth of the phenomenon. That article helped me to convince some very traditional academics that JAP-baiting was a legitimate project worthy of sociological analysis.

Lori Rutter
Cambridge MA

KOL ISHAH Women's Voices

Teenagers Confront Our Past in Poland

AUSCHWITZ, Poland, 1943: A young Jewish woman named Sophia, in her twenties, trudged down a dirt road. A wife and mother, she had no idea where her husband and child were. She never found out, because she never left Auschwitz.

AUSCHWITZ, Poland, 1990: A young Jewish woman named Sophia, in her twenties, trudged down a dirt road. A wife and mother, she knew her husband and child were safe and that she would walk out of Auschwitz to freedom and security.

"I'm going to Poland," I told my mother several months ago.

I wasn't sure how she would react to such an announcement. My mother lost her own mother in Auschwitz and her father in Sobibor, two of Nazi Germany's most efficient death camps in Poland; she was one of the few children to survive.

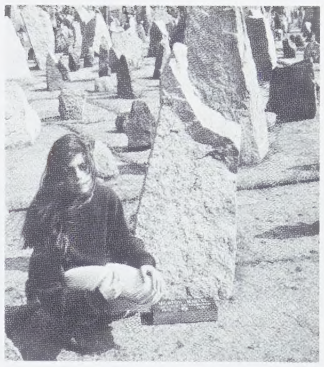
At first she was silent, letting me talk.

I explained to her that I would be an adult participant on "The March of the Living," a journey for Jewish high school students through Poland. We would commemorate Yom Hashoa (Holocaust Remembrance Day) by marching through Auschwitz. And after visiting what little remains of Jewish life in Poland, we would continue our journey in Israel, where we would celebrate the rebirth of the Jewish homeland on Yom Ha'Atzmaut (Israel Independence Day). The trip would take place from April 18 through May 3, uniting 3,500 young Jews from 36 countries. I felt I owed it to the grandparents I never knew to go and see with my own eyes what happened to them and to our people.

"It chills me to the bone to think that my daughter, named for my mother who died in Poland, is going to be in that terrible place. I will not think about you while you are there," my mother told me.

I debated with myself over why I wanted to go on this trip, which I knew would be difficult and emotional for everyone. I was leaving behind my husband and one-year-old son for two weeks, not an easy thing to do.

As soon as the plane took off, I



knew I had made the right choice.

Throughout the trip, all of the adult participants marvelled at the teenagers, with their unending enthusiasm, perceptive understanding and deep concern. Florence Siegel, a grandmother who took part in the trip, said it best: "The children were an inspiration and tremendous comfort to me. There were no age barriers between us; we were all peers."

The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln

Barbara Barrie

Tovah Feldshuh

300th Anniversary Tribute in Multimedia

Sunday, December 16 at 7:30 pm

In 1690, after the death of her first husband, Glückel of Hameln (1646-1724) began her writings which coincide with one of the most turbulent periods in European Jewish history. Her memoirs, originally in Yiddish, preserve for us her fascinating biography, eyewitness accounts of earthshaking events and her own sage observations on the ways of the world. Glückel is emblematic of countless women who left no memoirs but who led lives that were just as full of personal dignity.

A dramatic reading by actresses **Barbara Barrie** and **Tovah Feldshuh,** writers **E.M. Broner, Letty Cottin Pogrebin** and **Anne Roiphe** and Manhattan Borough President **Ruth Messinger;** musical accompaniment by the **Early Music Players,** and an exhibition by artist **Beth Haber** of works inspired by Gluckel's memoirs.

Other Events of Interest

Gila Almagor Live!—
Sunday, Nov. 25, 2 & 7:30 pm
Paula Hyman on A Woman's Place—
Sunday, Dec. 16, 9:30-5 pm
Phyllis Trible on a Feminist Interpretation of the Bible—
Sunday, Feb. 3, 9:30-5 pm

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Many of the participants on The March of the Living had direct links to the Holocaust. Each of us searched the prisoner lists and photos at Auschwitz, looking for a family name, only to learn from our tour guides that the photos and lists are rotated and are incomplete. We stared at the piles of human hair, the suitcases and the eyeglasses and we wondered, did they belong to a relative?

Rositta Kenigsberg, president of the International Network of Children of Survivors, travelled two hours from Warsaw to visit the former home of her father, a survivor of several concentration camps, in a small town called Miedzyrzec near the Russian border. While she was taking pictures of the house, an elderly man came out of a nearby building. He began yelling at her to go away and threatened to call the police.

"We told him that this was the house my father used to live in, so he probably figured out we were Jewish. He was spewing hate," Kenigsberg said.

One young woman, who had lost relatives in each of the four camps visited by the group, placed a small tombstone engraved with her grandfather's name among the thousands of jagged stones at Treblinka. "I want to leave his memory here for everyone else to see," she said.

— Sophia M. Fischer

For Families Touched by AIDS

"I am not religious but . . ."

So begins a typical call to Congregation Beth Simchat Torah's AIDS counselling hotline. Saul Zalkin, who answers calls from his home, responds with a welcome. "These people may not pray every day, but they have religious belief. The group helps them to feel less ill at ease with religious issues."

Although the New York City-based gay and lesbian synagogue's hotline group had originally planned to provide spiritual counselling, group members tend to handle requests for more practical advice: problems with poor pastoral counselling of AIDS patients in the hospitals, questions about funerals and mourning practices, requests for memorial services.

The Beth Simchat Torah counselling hotline was established six years ago by a small group of congregants. The volunteer staffers realize that many AIDS patients are wary of overtures by their own religious groups, possibly because of past conflicts, according to Zalkin. This is most evident in hospital situations where Jewish patients often reject the attentions of a rabbi, but speak to a priest, while Catholic patients will reach out to a visiting rabbi.

The Beth Simchat Torah group visits patients in AIDS wards on a regular basis and prepares gift packages three times a year for the Jewish holidays. The feedback from patients, group members find, is "wonderful."

The Beth Simchat Torah group encourages calls not only from people with AIDS, but from family members and friends who want counselling and support. For information about the hotline call Congregation Beth Simchat Torah at (212) 929-9498 or Saul Zalkin at (212) 724-6050. *— RK*

Raising Awareness of AIDS in Israel

Sections of the International AIDS memorial quilt containing panels created by Israeli and diaspora Jews and by Arabs will be displayed in Israel this winter. The entire quilt, an enormous piece of art now consisting of over 12,000 panels, has been created by friends or family members of those who have died of AIDS worldwide.

The Israeli exhibit of the quilt has been requested by Israeli health officials, who say that with the current political situation in Israel, AIDS education and awareness has received insufficient attention.

The number of AIDS cases in Israel is still relatively low, according to Ron Lezell, spokesperson for the Friends of the Israel Tour. "Right now, there is an incredible opportunity for Israeli Jews and Arabs to keep the number low and stop the spread of AIDS.

The selected panels are being brought to Israel for the occasion of World AIDS Day (December 1), and will be on display for three weeks in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa. Educational material will be distributed at the exhibitions.

Individual contributions and organizational sponsorship are being solicited by the Friends of the Israel Tour. Funds in excess of tour cost will go to Israel's AIDS services. U.S. tax-deductible contributions can be made to: NAMES Project-Israel Tour, 1642 Irving St., San Francisco, CA 94122. Those who seek information on the quilt or who will wish their panel to be included on the tour should contact Friends of the Israel Tour at (415)824-4449 or the NAMES Project Foundation at (415)863-5511. *— RK*

Making Jews Visible to Academic Feminists

Are Jewish women — or are Jewish women not — women of color? Should anti-Semitism be categorized as racism? What are the constraints a family-oriented Jewish tradition places on both lesbian and heterosexual women?

These were just some of the topics discussed at the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) conference in Akron, Ohio this June. For many, the Jewish Women's Caucus of the NWSA is a "family of choice." Together this group meets every year to openly discuss issues that are often controversial and emotional. "The essential practice of Judaism is asking questions and struggling to find the answers," says one member, and by this qualification the women of the caucus are devout.

This spring, Jewish feminists, academics, and activists met in ten sessions covering topics ranging from learning to sing Jewish music to peace in the Middle East as a feminist issue. Particularly moving were sessions on relations between Jewish and African-American women and on identifying heterosexism. The first workshop closed with a call to examine the workings of anti-Semitism. Said one participant, "The work of education must be done *before* a crisis occurs; if not, Jews always lose the battle." The second workshop ended with tears and embraces between lesbian and heterosexual women.

The caucus, which has been in existence for five years, is one of twelve caucuses within the National Women's Studies Association. The NWSA convention draws 2,000 people annually, and this audience takes part in workshops sponsored by each of the caucuses.

In a feminist movement often accused of ethnocentricity, the formation of a Jewish women's caucus has been an important step. Says University of Maryland Prof. Evelyn Torton Beck, "We have brought Jewish visibility to the conference. Not only non-Jews are aware of the power and presence of Jewish women, but we've made Jewish women aware that they can be Jewish publicly in a feminist space. We have helped bring Jewish women back to their Jewishness."

— Cookie Davis

Continued on page 37

BODY & Soul

A new column

NIGHT OF THE STAIRCASE

by Ada Aharoni and Thea Wolf

One warm evening, in the spring of 1936, when I was on night duty [at the hospital in Alexandria] I sat by the bedside of a pretty, but somewhat sad-looking young Jewish-Egyptian mother, by the name of Emily. She had given birth to a fine baby girl three days before, and therefore her sorrowful looks intrigued me.

"Why are you so sad, Emily?" I asked her. "You seem to have a charming husband, and now you have a beautiful and healthy baby. So why the mournful face?"

Emily looked at me with her bright brown eyes. "It all began on the night of the staircase," she murmured sadly. "Would you like to hear the story?"

"Oh, yes!" I nodded enthusiastically. These stories I heard from my patients gave me a deeper insight into what growing up Jewish in Egypt meant.

"Well, one afternoon, when I was seven years old," Emily began to relate, "my mother came to my room and said, 'We're going to Nona, [*Nona* means grandmother in Ladino.] your grandmother Regina'.

"To my surprise, when we got there, Nona stood in the doorway, barring it with her big impressive body, and was firm in her refusal to let us in.

"'What's happening tonight?' I asked myself in bewilderment. Nona was usually so glad when we came to see her, and she always had such delicious cakes and chocolate for us.

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Flowers in the Blood

Gay Courter

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"'Don't be silly. it doesn't pay to be *zaalana*. Go back to your husband,' Nona chided my mother coaxingly. 'All husbands in Egypt are the same, they all end up by sleeping with these wanton girl servants. Is this a logical reason for you to leave him?'

"'I'll never go back, never, never!' my mother repeated in a voice as if the world had come to an end. I didn't know what the meaning of *zaalana* was, but I supposed it was something like *stupid,* and I was angry with my grandmother for calling my mother names.

"'It never pays to be *zaalana,*' Nona repeated firmly, still refusing to let the three of us in.

"Years later I learned that to be *zaalana* (hurt) was a widespread social convention in Egypt. When a wife had been deeply hurt by her husband and felt she had to do something drastic, instead of throwing herself into the Nile, she used to pack herself and her children away to her mother's. You could recognize a *zaalana* woman because she usually carried a *boga,* a round bundle comprising some clothing and belongings, as one takes camping. True to form, my mother and I were each carrying our *boga*. My two-year-old brother, Dodi, was too small to carry any, so my mother was carrying him in addition to her *boga*. My grandmother just saw the *bogas* and understood what had happened. Afraid that the 'camping' at her home might be too prolonged, she took a firm stand right from the beginning.

"'And what will you do with yourself and the children?' she continued. 'You know I can't support you, your father is drunk again, and what I earn as a private nurse is barely enough to live on and to go on keeping this house. Princess Fahida, my present patient, is generous enough, but with those tuberculosis lung cases, there's no knowing how long she'll last. And what she pays me is not enough to feed three extra mouths. So be wise, and go back to your husband, Mona, before it's too late, *mon chou-chou!*'

"She hurriedly kissed the three of us, pushed us away, and shut the door energetically behind us.

"My mother, still holding Dodi in her arms, sat on the doorstep and wept an ocean. My heart broke. I was all on my mother's side, without really knowing what it was all about. In my mind mother was always right, especially when she cried. My father had done something to hurt her, and this something was linked with sleeping with our maid, Sayeda. I didn't see why it was such a terrible thing, when my mother had been away in Alexandria to visit my sick Aunt Becky; I had slept with Sayeda myself. Why my father wanted to sleep with the maid was another puzzle. He was big and strong and wasn't afraid of the dark shapes under the bed, like me. But nobody asked me, so I kept silent, faithful to the prevalent educational motto in Egypt that children should be seen but not heard.

"But mother's tears flooded my heart, and I cried with her, feeling waves of pity surging, and a deep frustration at my inability to help her.

"'I'll never go back to the house again!' she wept. 'But what will become of us? What in the world will become of us?' Little Dodi woke up and quickly joined the crying choir; the three of us cried together in three different notes. My brother wailed the loudest, astonished that this time he had an unusual accompaniment, without of course having the faintest idea what it was all about. He was always ready for a good cry and had never had the opportunity before of having a general one in which his elders readily participated of their own free will. He therefore bawled out loudly to his heart's content, until he got tired, sucked his thumb, and fell asleep on my mother's heaving breast again.

"I was just seven years old then, but I still remember the dead, lost feeling, as if we were abandoned by the whole world. Nobody loves us, nobody wants us, my heart cried in pain. I wiped my mother's tears with my smudgy fingers, and they left two dark blotches like a delta on her cheeks, spreading all over her delicate face. I kissed her and tried to reassure her, 'I'm here, mamica, and will always be with you. And so will Dodi,' I added.

"'Why didn't I learn a profession or trade?' mother sobbed. 'Why didn't he allow me to go on teaching my music lessons? Why did he have to sell my piano? I could have supported you if I had a job, and we wouldn't need him. If I could only work, if I could only be free!' She wept and sighed heartbreakingly.

"I hated my father then for selling my mother's piano. If I had money I would have bought her a fine large piano right on the spot; even in the middle of the night.

"'But why can't you work?' I asked.

"'*Ca ne se fait pas*. it's not done. A Jewish woman of my standing cannot work. It's this stupid society of ours!' she sighed deeply, as if she had lost all the hope in the world.

"I pondered what she said. If it was stupid, then why abide by it? Why did grown-ups like doing stupid things, sometimes?

"'Will Dodi work when he grows up?' I asked suddenly.

"'Of course Dodi will work. He's not a woman. He will be a man,' she said proudly, holding my baby brother affectionately. I looked at the sleeping Dodi, sucking his thumb. It seemed so ridiculous that he, with his small hands and feet and such few teeth, Dodi, with his plump thumb in his tiny mouth, would work and be free to do whatever he wanted, and

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mother couldn't and neither could I, because she was a woman, and I was a girl. The injustice of it struck me like a slap across the face. I made a decision there and then that night on the stairs, a major decision in my life, perhaps one of the rare ones to which I have always been true: *I would work*. Whatever they say, 'done or not done,' I would never be dependent on anybody, or on any man, like my mother. I would be free, like Dodi.

"I kissed my mother reassuringly again on her beautiful chestnut hair and looked deeply into her honey eyes. 'It'll be all right, Mama,' I whispered. 'I will work. I won't be stupid. I will work like Dodi and bring home money, and we'll both be free.' She smiled in the darkness through her tears, but her smile contained a fountain of sadness. She patted me over the head and sighed. Her sigh sounded like the wailing of the sea in Alexandria where we went every summer.

"'*Je n'ai pas de la chance*,' my mother muttered, rocking little Dodi. 'I have no luck; I was born on a star-crossed night,' she wailed. My mother never agreed with me on the subject of free choice: She had a blind faith in fate.

"That night I talked to my mother, there on my Nona's staircase, almost as if I were an adult; as if I could really help. I nodded my head and hated my father. There in the dark, flattered by my mother's confidence in me, I became almost a professional confidante, with an ear as big as my small fist. I tried to ask the right questions and answer the right replies, in a solemn, serious voice. I became overnight, on that staircase, my mother's keeper, my mother's mother. This feeling of deep responsibility toward my mother, born on the night of the staircase, has accompanied me all my life.

"And now, at the age of twenty, and myself a mother, I ask myself again: perhaps my mother was right about the impossibility of free choice, and I was wrong," Emily ended bitterly. At this point I interrupted her.

"But why are you so unhappy now?"

Emily heaved a deep sigh and her fingers trembled slightly on the flowered bedcover. "David, my husband, doesn't want me to work anymore," she burst out.

"Probably until your baby grows up a little, and then you'll be able to go back to work," I suggested.

But she complained tearfully, "No, we had a row yesterday." Her lips twitched in pain. "He made it clear that now I was a mother, he didn't want me to ever work again, even when our daughter will be grown up! It's simply not done, he says. The same words my mother used on the fateful night of the staircase." She started sobbing quietly.

"Do I ask him to leave his job because little Anette is born? How unfair men can be! Mother was right. It's a man's world, and we women are forced to become helpless bystanders in the kitchen, chained by pots and pans and diapers!"

"Don't worry, Emily," I comforted her, "you will work; in your home and outside of your home, too, if you want to. You will always work."

"But how?" she cried, looking at me with a startled look.

I smiled at her reassuringly. "When the time comes, you'll know how."

A few days later she left the hospital with baby Anette and David, both proud of their fine baby. I lost sight of Emily for a couple of years, until I entered one of the big travel agencies in the center of Alexandria one day to get a train ticket. There was Emily, typing happily away and giving instructions to a new secretary.

"How did you convince David?" I asked, relieved to see her so happy.

"I told him about the night of the staircase, and that from that night onwards my work and my job had become part of me. He could either have both parts or none. He chose both," she smiled merrily. "You were right, Sister Thea, when you told me then not to worry, and that I would always work. I didn't tell you then, but your firm words were for me like an injection of energy and hope. I never forgot what you said. When I left the hospital with my baby girl Anette, I already knew then, deep in my heart, that you were right, and that I would indeed find a way to return to my job."

"I'm glad my injection worked," I laughed. Emily flashed her beautiful smile at me, and her happiness lit a flame of joy in my heart. L

Ada Aharoni is a writer, poet, scholar and editor of the literary magazine Galim: The Waves. *Thea Wolf was born in Germany, moved to Egypt in 1932 and immigrated to Israel in 1947. She currently lives in Jerusalem.*

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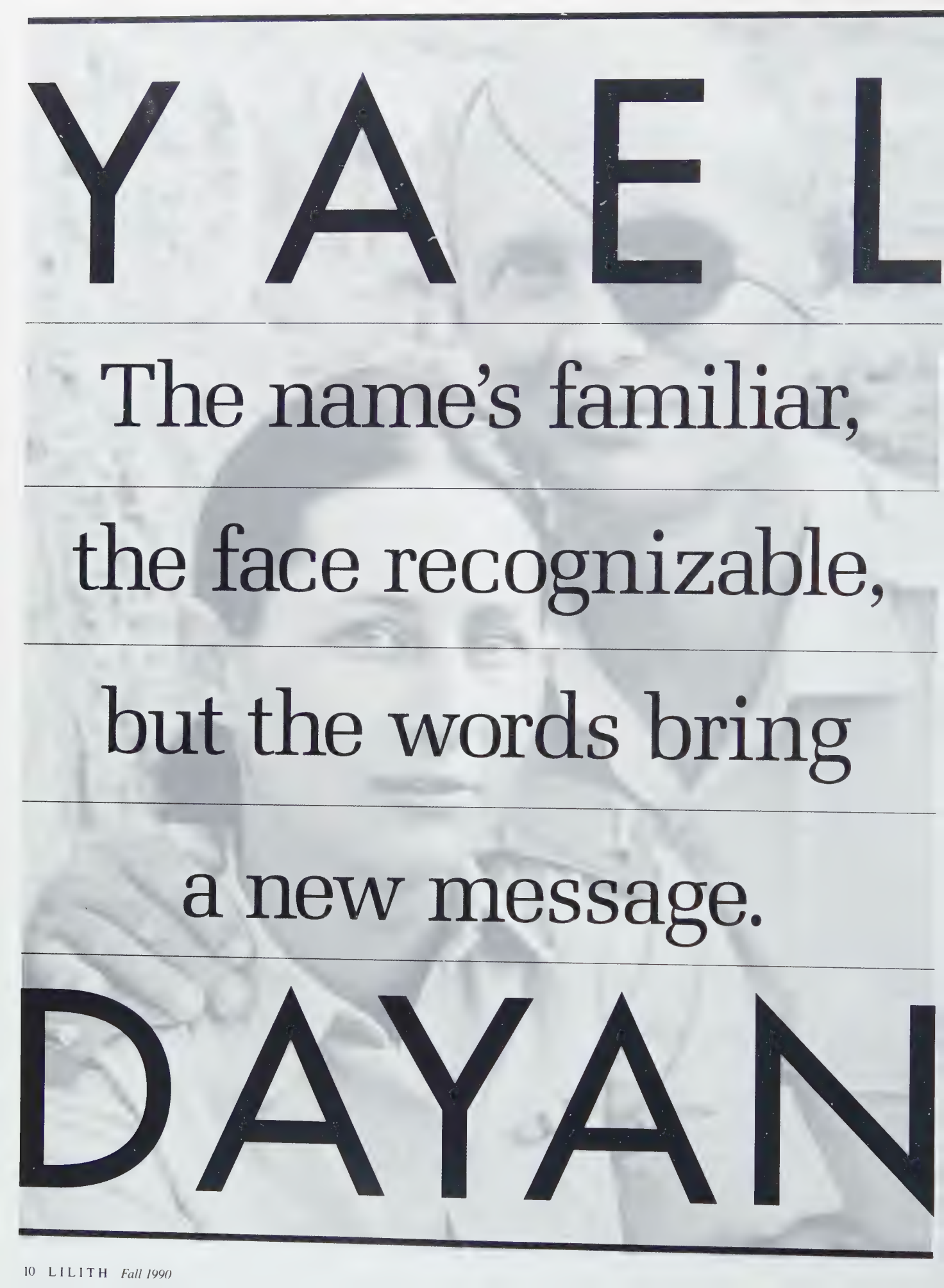
YAEL
The name's familiar,
the face recognizable,
but the words bring
a new message.
DAYAN

Barbara Harshav, our irreverent correspondent in Tel Aviv, writes:

These days in Israel women seem to come in one of two colors: white or black — both invisible. The "whites" are those who stood up en masse (clad in white) in the middle of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's speech to 3,000 Likud committee members, waving placards to protest the fact that no female members grace Shamir's patchwork cabinet. (Likud has one "token" woman in the Knesset — Sarah Doron — who apparently follows orders.) The prime minister paused, stood quietly, smiling indulgently at the yelling women. When he had had enough, he said in a paternal tone (as if he were gently reproving errant daughters), "Yes, yes, we've heard you, now sit down and be quiet, and we'll think about your complaint." Translation: Let the grown-ups get back to business.

And the well-mannered women did indeed sit down quietly and didn't make any more fuss.

Then there are the "black" women — they don't sit down. Clad all in black, they demonstrate every Friday all over the country for an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, and there's something pathetic about them too. Every week they stand vigil; every week they are attacked — not for their politics, but for their gender. ("Arafat's Whores," for example, is one of the milder curses they endure.) Like the women in white, they are, at best, patronized. Let's just say (putting it generously) that women are not taken seriously in Israeli politics.

One indicator of our being disregarded here is press coverage of political women: there's a general silence

Citizens in Israel express their displeasure with government policies either by standing somewhere (clad, for example, in white or black) holding signs; by attending mass demonstrations where you listen to speeches, sing *HaTikva* (Israel's national anthem) and fight traffic jams getting home; or by striking (for higher wages or better conditions).

In Israel, democracy seems to mean that everybody votes and then the manipulated bare majority rules — absolutely. In bolder terms, everybody votes and then is subject to a virtual dictatorship until the next election. If Lysistrata showed up here tomorrow and presented her peace plan, it would be Greek to the Israelis.

—BH

A new woman's voice in the darkness belongs to Yael Dayan who seems recently to have undergone a feminist metamorphosis. You know the name: daughter of the late war-hero Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan, descendant, on both sides, of pioneer families in Israel, author of several novels [the best-known of which are *Death Had Two Sons* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967) and *New Face in the Mirror* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1959)] and of a heady, controversial memoir of her father called *My Father, His Daughter* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1985).

Unlike the "blacks" and "whites" mentioned above, Dayan, born in Palestine in 1939, is a mainstream political activist, a *realpolitik* pragmatist, a Labor centrist. She is also newly active in promoting women's rights, having come recently to the belief that peace and women's issues are conceptually appropriate bedfellows.

Far from the common misconception — that Israel is legally, economically and socially advanced in terms of women's rights — the truth is that Israeli women are light-years behind the advances that U.S. women have made over the last twenty years.

Israeli women are just waking up ... lawyer and analyst Miriam Benson reminds us of that [see p. 12], as does a fiery, intense Dayan.

Yael Dayan talks with Susan Weidman Schneider...

Debbi Cooper

SWS: It seems there's been a turnaround in your thinking since 1984. Then, at a conference on women's issues in Jerusalem, you astonished many of us by suggesting that feminist issues were not an important concern of yours. These days, however, you are the co-chair of the Israel Women's Network political committee. and you frequently address women's issues. What has made you shift?

YD: As I have become involved with the rights of all groups living in Israel, I've become more involved with women's rights, too. Still, I think that women who are involved only in women's rights are missing the point.

SWS: Right now, Israel's parliament has fewer women than at any time in the country's history; small, right-wing, ultra-religious parties still control areas that affect women's lives deeply ... what are the chances for women political leaders to make change?

YD: *Why* are we [women] regressing in Israel? Why are we not getting the equality that we were promised? Well. First of all we are a society in battle, in actual battle. So this of course gives priority to men, who are doing the actual fighting. This has been like this for *so* many years now that it

has set a pattern. Someone who's a general or a top commander in the field, he will become also a leader in other fields, politics too, and that goes without saying.

And then, of course, the origins of most of our population are from societies where women are inferior. It's not something that can just be legislated, it's a deep sociological trait. We're now into second and third generations of these groups originating in Islamic countries, and this has an effect. Of course, it's getting better with time.

Another thing is the religious domination, the Orthodox domination of sections of our lives, and this also will take a while [to remedy]. So we have a macho, male society which is not only engaged militarily but is dominated by male tradition religiously and sociologically.

SWS: Do you think that if attitudinal feminist changes take place in women's and men's households, they are then likelier to take place in the body politic?

YD: Homes are not so much a problem in Israel because women's social and everyday life is not as inferior as life in the political system or general system. Legislation and political representation hasn't advanced as much as the status of women at home.

SWS: How about the large numbers of battered women?

YD: I think there is a mood of general violence in the country. There are more battered men than before as well, battered children — by mothers, not necessarily fathers. There is a rise in violence in this society.

It certainly has to do with the Occupation [of the Arab territories]. If the society were engaged in just fulfilling its normal functions, and not engaged in things it cannot basically cope with, it would probably be calmer on the whole.

SWS: So you believe that with a real peace in the region *women's* lives will improve in all ways. What do you see as women's role in the peace process?

YD: Women lead the peace movement. They've definitely got positions of leadership there. But perhaps if there were more women in politics, there would be fewer women in the protest movement. Women are having an effect [in the peace movement] because it's a grassroots movement, *despite* the fact that it's primarily a women's movement led by women.

Women in Black is useful, but I don't participate in it. It's not my style. I'm not very interested in demonstrating without the political work that goes with it. I do my work within the party. Occasionally I address a Peace Now rally, but that's so I

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ISRAELI WOMEN

How are women's issues really faring in Israel?

To answer that question, we need to note two significant factors. One, Israel has no written constitution. Two, Israel's governmental structure does not provide for direct representation in the Knesset, Israel's parliament; instead, voters choose a party and are left with the party's choice of Knesset members.

Thus the average Israeli citizen is unlikely to feel that she has a direct or effective forum for addressing injustice, discrimination, inequality and violation of civil rights. (A proposed Civil Rights Bill — the first step toward creating a constitution — was quashed by the government in 1990 because of pressure from religious political parties. This bill would also have instituted electoral reform.) Even when activists are organized enough to lobby on a given issue, they have no direct representatives to approach with letters, petitions and phone calls.

Despite these obstacles, there have been some positive changes. Many of these stem from the work done by a 92-person committee established in 1975 by then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to examine the status of women in Israel. The committee, headed by Knesset member (MK) Ora Namir, submitted a report, known as the Namir Report, with 241 specific recommendations for change; only 37 have been fully implemented.

Some highlights of the recent changes in women's status in Israel:

- Prohibiting discrimination in job advertising, hiring, work conditions, advancement, training and firing policies, a new Equal Employment Opportunities law was passed in 1988, after many years of lobbying by several different women's organizations. The new law grants the right to parental leave and family sick leave for either parent. It also outlaws sexual harassment in the workplace. Unfortunately, with no enforcement mechanism in place to deal with violations, cases must be handled through the courts.

- Equal retirement ages for men and women became law in 1987. The passage of this Knesset bill was the result of a long battle by several women's organizations, including a much-publicized lawsuit by Naomi Nevo against the Jewish Agency. Nevo had wanted to work until age 65, the usual retirement age for Israeli men, but the Jewish Agency forced her to retire at 60.
- A rape victim can no longer be questioned in court concerning her past sexual history, due to a 1988 amendment to the criminal code on sex offenses. The requirement for corroboration in rape cases was abolished in 1982.
- Recently, a bill dealing with domestic violence was proposed in the Knesset. The bill would enable the victim to get a temporary restraining order against the batterer, and there would be mandatory arrest for violating the order. The Namir Report had also called for the establishment of battered women's shelters; today there are only four.
- The Ministry of Education issued instructions to teachers and principals in 1987 asking them to remove sexist books from the classroom and to emphasize sexual equality in the curriculum.
- Public schools will be moving back to a "long school day" program. Since 1982, school dismissal has been between 12 and 1 p.m., causing serious child care problems for working parents. One woman who recently spent a year in Israel de-

can suggest that Labor is also present in the peace camp.

Neither Mapam nor any of the other movements nor Peace Now can replace the present government. Only Labor can.

SWS: It sounds like you think women need to play a tougher political game.

YD: It's not the *content* of politics but the *mechanics* that I'm talking about. Women need to be represented in politics, in lobbying, need to try to achieve legislation. We need to get more women into politics and into the Knesset. Hopefully the next election will show results.

SWS: What are you doing to promote women's role in politics? Under the present electoral system in Israel, citizens vote only for a party "list," with individual candidates placed on the list in an order determined in the smoke-filled rooms of party leaders. Are you encouraging Israeli women to put more women on the list and to get involved in grassroots politics?

YD: Yes, both. Ideally, women need to vote for parties which have women on their [electoral] lists. The political section of the Israel Women's Network [the Israeli feminist organization headed by Alice Shalvi] concentrates on women asserting themselves politically, on political education, but mostly we are concerned about representation in everything. We want to make sure that women are in political office either by affirmative action or directly.

Each party should assure some kind of quota of women and fight for internal legislation. Later it should be a State law, at least as a temporary measure.

SWS: Are you saying that there should be equal numbers of women and men represented in the Knesset or in a party?

YD: Well, not equal, but about 20 or 25 percent — in the boards of public companies, in the Knesset, in different institutions that are State-controlled.

SWS: Do you think that more women in the Knesset will make it easier to have women's issues addressed? Like abortion laws or divorce laws?

YD: Some men have devoted their Knesset careers to these issues, so I wouldn't differentiate, but I do think that more women in the Knesset would show others that it's worthwhile to fight, that there's a chance to get to high positions.

If there were more women in the Knesset, they might deal with labor laws: equal pay and equal opportunities and all that has to do with labor. Women get fired before men do, and married women are taxed together with their husbands and not separately. There is a whole list [of in-

PRESS FOR CHANGE

clared that the truncated school day and the havoc it wreaked with her schedule as a working parent was a primary reason for her not staying there.

- Sex education in the schools was mandated in 1987, but implementation and monitoring of this requirement has been slow.
- In 1989, the Ministry of Religion proposed a law to allow the civil courts to impose civil sanctions on men who refuse to give a *get* (divorce bill) after the religious courts have ordered them to do so. However, women still cannot divorce their husbands or be judges or witnesses in religious courts, and only men may remarry without terminating their prior marriage under certain conditions (the problem of *Agunot*).
- The Leah Shakdiel case, a major victory for women's rights, ensured the right of women to serve on municipal religious councils.

More than a decade after the Namir Report's recommendations were first issued, there is still much unfinished business on the Israeli women's agenda:

- Abortion on demand in the first trimester of pregnancy. Israeli law currently allows for abortions only after review by a three-person hospital committee. Abortion is only granted if a woman is younger than 16 or older than 40; if the pregnancy is the result of rape, incest or extra-marital sex; if the fetus will have a defect; or if the pregnancy will cause a physical or mental health hazard to the mother.
- Equal pay for work of comparable worth in traditionally male and female jobs.
- Increased career options for women in the army by advancing women officers to senior ranks.
- Guarantees that women will fill 25 percent of the slots on all political party "lists." Labor and Mapam have 20 percent guarantees for national elections, but there is no mechanism for enforcement so the guarantee is ignored; Shinui opposes such a guarantee, and the other parties have not stated their positions. In the last election, the number of women in the Knesset went down to 7 out of 120, the lowest ever in Israel's history. These disappointing results have prompted several prominent feminists to consider reviving the Women's Party in Israel, which had a short-lived history in the late 1970's.

In addition, several new areas need addressing. Groups of women in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, claiming that the medical establishment pays no attention to women patients' rights, are trying to establish an effective women's health movement.

Women are also lobbying for the right to pray as a group at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, a case which is currently before the courts.

Finally, many women's groups are considering whether to continue pursuing change through *halacha* (Jewish law) or to demand changes in civil law to provide for secular marriage and divorce.

—Miriam Benson

Benson is a New York-based attorney who recently spent six years in Israel working on behalf of women's issues. This article was based on research conducted under the auspices of the Israel Women's Network.

justices], but I would say that the domain of labor is the most important.

Because there are so few female Knesset members, they cannot afford to turn against the party line on big issues. If there were more women in the Knesset, there is no question that this would add to the power of women. They could lobby within their party.

SWS: If the electoral system changes, will this add to the power of women, as well as give religious parties less of a stranglehold?

YD: Yes. In the past — in relation to the religious parties — there was an agreement, a balance. When my party, Labor, was in power and more women were in the Knesset, there was an agreement with the religious parties, mostly with the Mafdal [National Religious Party], and it worked out fine. It was slow and not entirely satisfactory, but it *was* progress.

Yet now, even though the religious are still a minority — the same number in the population — they have a hold. There is a regression in these right-wing Likud times. It has to do with the electoral system. If both [major] parties were to decide to say "no" to certain things, then once the religious parties didn't have a hold on one large party against the other, things would work better.

The electoral system must change, and this will add to the power of women, because it will mean that women will represent a constituency, not just a party.

SWS: You think Labor will be able to form a majority government without the religious fringe parties, and that then some of the inequities for women will be addressed?

YD: No. I don't see that Labor in the near future can form a government without at least one or two religious parties. And there is always a price to be paid, usually at the expense of the weaker factions ... which of course affects women. If we have a chance to advance the peace process and if the price tag [for forming a coalition government] means delaying changes in the abortion law or things like this, it's the price that we will pay.

SWS: How much of a conflict is this for you if, in helping to form a Labor government, you make concessions on women's issues?

YD: It's a conflict which I can live with. If we really can advance towards peace, I see this as a springboard for other changes. Peace and war are irreversible, but other things are less absolute. Since we don't have a constitution, if there is a change in the law it can be undone later. So it wouldn't bother me to go along on some concessions and then in better times, say, try and change them. If there is peace, a lot of wrongs will be corrected.

SWS: Do you expect to effect these changes by running for Knesset?

YD: Well, I'll try. I'll run for a Knesset seat within the Labor framework. If it works, fine. If it doesn't, I'm professionally a writer and I will resume my writing ... and do my political work *outside* of the Knesset.

SWS: Would you describe yourself as always having been a political person?

YD: Yes. I was always involved with political activity without running myself. I can't remember one election year when I was not campaigning for someone. If I do not get a Knesset seat, I would see myself in some extra-parliamentary position, perhaps in the Foreign Ministry. I think I could very ably represent Israel in the United Nations, or as ambassador in Washington.

SWS: Do you think that to American Jews your name and your connections with your father would be an advantage? After all, he was a prime architect of the Camp David agreement framing the peace negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

YD: No, on the contrary. A disadvantage.

SWS: Would people perceive your policies as more right-wing because they associate you with your father?

YD: Look, I think that had my father lived in these times, he too would have wanted to move the peace process along.

SWS: I've heard you talk about what you call the "asymmetry of the dream" in relation to peace in the Middle East. What exactly do you mean by that?

YD: We started as a society of immigrants; the Palestinians started as people on their land. They've expected their state to be delivered to them by outside forces; we had to do it ourselves, and so on down the line. There is no comparison, neither in the time element nor in the content. The point is that they are not going to wait for 2,000 years to have a homeland. Where they are now is where we were before, and the way we demanded and got our rights, they deserve just as much.

SWS: You've toured the U.S. this past spring with Palestinian activist Faisel Husseini and you've spoken of "two states for two peoples." In the process of working out an end to the occupation of the territory administered by Israel since the 1967 Six Day War, what do you consider *non*-negotiable?

YD: I think Jerusalem is an issue that has to be addressed in a different way from the rest of the territories, of course. Some of it is unnegotiable, but unnegotiable means only that we will retain our sovereignty over it. It does not mean that it cannot be shared. One can perhaps come up with different options.

Palestinians who have residence in Jerusalem should have citizenship *outside*, and they should be eligible to vote for the Palestinian entity at the same time that their residence would allow them to vote within the Jerusalem municipality.

It's like absentee votes for Americans. You allow them to vote wherever they are, but the point is to come up with an arrangement by which Jerusalem remains united. And yet perhaps part of it can be the seat of government for the Palestinians. It depends what the entire thing works out to be. Anyway, Jerusalem will never be the first issue to be tackled: it will the last one.

SWS: Well, I was thinking about the territories in general. Are there parts of the territories that you would feel are not open to negotiation?

YD: There are areas which are not inhabited and offer us clearer borders, like the Latrun area, which there is no way to return. There may be other small places which are inhabitated by Arabs and which were in the previous borders which can be exchanged now and returned, but these are minor corrections.

SWS: Do you think that, in general, the large portion of the occupied territories will be returned?

YD: Oh sure, excluding the territory around Jerusalem. The newly built quarters of Jerusalem there's no way to return, of course. All this will go on some kind of key, according to which most of the Palestinian population will be free of occupation and be sovereign, while Israel will not lose the security of some of the places in the territories. Sometimes it's not land, but other guarantees.

There's no way to annex people. You can annex land, but not people. Israeli Arabs within the Green Line [pre-1967 borders] would stay. It would be easier than ever to visit back and forth to the new Palestinian entity. Five minutes, closer than from Chicago to New York.

SWS: What do you think will happen to Jews who have settled in the occupied territories?

YD: They will have to opt whether they want to live under Israeli sovereignty and move back, or remain where they are and be a minority within whatever entity it will be. They'll have their options. Nothing has to be forced on them, but they can't have it both ways.

SWS: How do you advise women who want to be part of the system making changes in present-day Israel? What can you say to women who want to enter politics?

YD: They have to work within the party system — every party — and on the national level with other parties. It cannot be only an effort within the party. The power of women has to be expressed by sheer numbers. It must be mobilization — whether it's academic or grassroots. Ideally, women will not vote for parties which don't have women on their lists. Ideally, women will become aware of the importance of advancing women into decision-making positions.

We need lobbying, legislation and education. More and more women must register as party members and then elect convention members. Then they can easily put women in as 20 to 30 percent of the convention. And so it goes all the way up. We must make sure there are good candidates, and that they are willing to run. They must have economic power because otherwise running is impossible. There needs to be specific fundraising for women in all parties, to enable women to run.

SWS: How can American women help?

YD: Rather than contribute money to campaigns of parties, I would advise contributing to women within parties. Earmark it to women. What we're thinking of right now in Labor is to do a special fund that will take contributions from everywhere, to be used for women campaigning in the next elections. This is something that is being formed now. And if American women are interested in contributing, they can write me through the Women's Network [PO Box 3171, Jerusalem, Israel]. L

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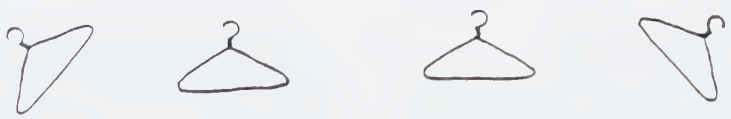

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Reworking the Rabbi's Role

by Julie Goss

Women in the pulpit today are changing the hierarchical nature of synagogue life and — surprise! — drawing in new congregants everywhere!

When Debra Hirsch took over as rabbi at the East End Temple in lower Manhattan five years ago, she inherited a barely solvent, 126-family congregation with seven students in the religious school and a building that was falling apart.

After 12 years with a part-time rabbi, the congregation was teetering on the brink of extinction. Things were so bad that "Mickey Mouse could have come in and done a good job," says Hirsch.

Today, the temple is experiencing a renaissance. Membership is over 200 families, the religious school has grown tenfold, and this year developers will break ground on a new, three-story synagogue which was financed by selling the old building's air rights.

When that happens, Hirsch, 35, will find herself one of four women rabbis heading up congregations of more than 300 families. With a little luck and a lot of drive, she overcame the wall of resistance many women who pursue the rabbinate come up against, both in and out of congregations.

In many ways, though, Hirsch is the exception. Since 1972, women have been entering the rabbinate in increasing numbers. Most of them do not even become congregational rabbis. But of those who do strike out on their own as solo rabbis, the majority wind up in small congregations low on prestige and pay — the ones male rabbis often pass up. "Women rabbis are serving congregations that are less desirable. Given the choice, congregations will choose male rabbis," says Rabbi Melanie Aron, sole rabbi of Temple Ahavath Sholom in Brooklyn, New York.

Small congregations have the additional problem of having small budgets, obliging the rabbi to serve as resident jack-of-all-trades. Many women say being on call around the clock exacts a heavy toll on their private lives. Often the tradeoffs are too great, dissuading many from considering pulpit positions. Those willing to tough it out still face additional traces of condescension in professional circles where traditional-minded male rabbis predominate.

Sexism aside, male rabbis tend to take more seriously their colleagues who have large, affluent congregations or those who serve in leadership roles in the Jewish community at large. But for many women rabbis, says Rabbi Lenore Bohm, 35, of the 450-family Temple Solel in Encinitas, California, not only are these jobs generally not available to women (or not coveted) but "attending weeknight meetings of the local board of rabbis can get pushed precipitously low on the priority list if you have a husband and children waiting for you at home."

Interestingly, few women rabbis these days experience much resistance from their congregants — who not only hired them, but may also be accustomed to interacting with women bosses in the course of ordinary life. This grassroots acceptance of women rabbis, along with a new vitality that female rabbis tend to bring to their jobs, has been a big boon to Judaism, bringing formerly alienated people back to the fold.

In Hirsch's case, the single biggest membership draw was the revamped religious school. Under her predecessor, the school began at the fourth grade, which meant that parents looking for a full Hebrew education for their children were forced to go elsewhere. Hirsch expanded the program to begin at kindergarten, and rescheduled classes from Sunday to Tuesday to accommodate weekend homeowners and divorced parents with weekend custody. This resulted in 35 additional members.

She also launched a pre-kindergarten program where parents could enroll their children without joining the temple. As the children grew, parents joined the temple to take advantage of the religious school. When the temple's organ died, she replaced it with a synthesizer, giving the cantor latitude to add flair to his songs. Occasionally he pipes in the steel drums for a Calypso feel. "People enjoy making [religious services] not as serious as some people make it."

In another effort to appeal to families, Hirsch shortened services to make them less formal, and added more family celebrations of festivals. At Purim, she encourages everyone to attend services in costume. The carnival features a humorous game called 'throwing sponges at the rabbi.' On the other hand, maintaining some standard synagogue traditions "becomes vital because there's a changing of the guard [a new rabbi]," she says.

Women rabbis across Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative movements alike are reinterpreting the relationship between rabbi and congregant. Instead of the traditional roles of omnipotent patriarchal leader and humble follower, women rabbis are quietly but decisively

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redefining the roles and narrowing the hierarchical gulf. "The push now is to change the image of the rabbi: to speak near the congregation, not from above. It's no longer the distant holy man, but rather that of a hand-holder, an educator to inspire and teach," says Rabbi Nina Cardin, assistant to the chancellor for academic affairs at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). "The idea is to empower the congregant to be a more active member of the Jewish community."

Aron of Temple Ahavath Sholom calls the new synagogue "more democratic and participatory. People come looking for community, not an authoritarian structure. Women by nature seem less distant, more human."

The result is a more accessible, informal approach to services. Both male and female congregants are frequently recruited to sing or lead the congregation in prayer; women drape themselves in the shawl traditionally reserved for men (the *tallit*). Instead of standing on the pulpit, Rabbi Stephanie Dickstein of the United Synagogue of Hoboken conducts parts of her service from the first pew where she is literally on equal footing with her congregation.

Sally Priesand, the nation's first woman rabbi, believes in establishing what she calls a "creative partnership" with her congregation — and with the board she reports to — at the 240-family Monmouth Reform Temple in Tinton Falls, New Jersey. "I don't see myself in total control," she says. "My opinion may not be necessarily accepted by the board. It doesn't happen too often, but sometimes I lose."

When her contract was up for renegotiation last year, Priesand announced it to the congregation so that people were free to express their opinions. She compares this style of leadership with the model espoused by her former supervisor, the late Rabbi Edward Klein at Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in Manhattan. "He would never have gone to a meeting unless he had all the votes," she says. "Klein would decide the temple's agenda. I work in such a way that the congregation decides for itself."

Each year, Priesand has mutual evaluations with her board as part of the give-and-take process of partnership. "I evaluate the board and the president and vice president evaluate me," she says. "A lot of my colleagues, men and women, stare at me in shock when I tell them I allow that, but our philosophy is that we can always be better than we are."

Rabbi Nina Cardin

How women rabbis dress during services also says a lot about their relationship with their congregations. A woman wanting to narrow the gap between herself as spiritual leader and her followers may choose not to wear the traditional robe. "Another woman — who says my problem is a lack of authority and responsibility — would want to establish herself as a rabbi and as such would put on the traditional garments," says Cardin. "The clothes establish a sense of otherliness or holiness."

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The male practice of covering one's head with a *yarmulke* has always symbolized humility toward God. Dickstein thinks that, as a rabbi, she too should cover her head, but rarely will she reach for the *yarmulke*. She may lead Shabbat prayers wearing a white fedora hat with a feather. Other times it's a beret or a crocheted headpiece.

Conversely, for Aron, wearing the traditional male garments is a way of reinforcing her legitimacy. "I don't want to wear a feminized *tallit*. I want to wear a *tallit*," she says. "Women aren't imitating men. They're trying to become citizens in the Jewish corporate body. Not men, but citizens."

Because they've been shut out for so long, women rabbis seem more adept at making others feel included. One way Amy Eilberg (the first Conservative woman rabbi, ordained in 1985) laid down the welcome mat was to take religion out of the abstract and ground it in concrete, personal experiences, which she felt people related to more easily. During her year at Har Zion Temple in Philadelphia, Eilberg says she composed sermons that drew heavily from experiences in her private life — like motherhood. "My rabbinate was a first person rabbinate," she says. "Women value experience as highly as intellect. My own story is as significant as any fact or piece of scholarship."

Others seem particularly disposed to encouraging diversity within their congregations. Recently, Rabbi Roz Gold of the Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation in Reston officiated over an Asian boy's bar mitzvah. "We have a lot of adopted kids from Vietnam and Cambodia," says Gold, who is trying to bring in more interfaith couples and potential converts. Non-mainstream congregants often feel more at ease with a woman rabbi; after all, she, in some sense, is an outsider, too.

Priesand says almost a third of the 240 families that belong to her synagogue are interfaith couples, a phenomenon that has been very controversial within the Jewish community. Like most rabbis, male and female, she won't officiate at mixed marriages but she does get a lot of requests. "People seem to think that a woman rabbi would do a mixed marriage since we're more liberal and have had to face a lot of discrimination ourselves."

Women are also the force behind the switch to gender-neutral God-language. Aron changed "He" to "You," and *Adonai* (which means "My Master") to "Eternal." The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) in the Reform movement is now developing a revised prayer book that will refer to God in gender-neutral terms; the Reconstructionist movement already has such a prayer book. Conservatives like Cardin and Dickstein, however, have problems with gender-neutral imagery. "It's worse. It distances us from God," says Cardin, adding that Hebrew doesn't have a neutral gender. "That solution is for people who don't know Hebrew." Other women rabbis use both male, female and neutral terms for God — King, Mother, Shekhina, Creator, Source.

Feminist liturgy is also being created to help women cope with such events as menstruation, abortion and hysterectomy. "There were women's prayers in the past, but they said, 'Oh, God! Please give me sons. Sons, Sons, Sons,'" says Aron. "Women's experiences weren't thought worthy enough to have prayers."

Both Eilberg and Dickstein are lobbying the law committee of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly to introduce mourning rituals for miscarriages, stillbirths, and babies that die within one month of birth. Jewish law currently bars parents from mourning these deaths on the theological grounds that you can't mourn what never lived. "At any time we confront death, having structured ritual helps us deal with the chaos," says Dickstein.

Still, for all the strides women rabbis have made in terms of broadening their constituency, investing followers with a greater voice in both ritual and temple governance, and in general adding a new flavor to Judaism, they continue to face resistance to their presence. For these women, breaking into the rabbinate has been at least as tough as the battle the rest of the female population waged for job equity. A lot of the issues, like childcare, salary, and the tug-of-war between career and family, are the same.

Rabbi Amy Eilberg

Sometimes it's as subtle as the laity's assumption (sometimes correct, but sometimes incorrect) that they can address a woman rabbi by her first name, instead of by "rabbi." "People expect familiarity with a woman professional," says Sue Fendrick, a student at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia. Some women drop the title to foster closeness. "I may sometimes err in letting go of the title too soon," says Eilberg. "Sometimes people need to see me as a rabbi." At the large and prestigious Har Zion, she was under heavy pressure not to go by her first name since it would break with long established temple etiquette.

Women assistant rabbis at large temples complain of being condescended to by their superiors. They resent being called "dear," or being grouped with the secretaries in the office. One rabbi called her former supervisor a "verbally abusive father figure who used consistently demeaning and humiliating language" toward her.

The entrenched resistance to women rabbis' authenticity can be a real roadblock in professional circles where rabbis interact. Women — especially the newly ordained Conservatives — tolerate all the classic signs of discrimination. Their older, male colleagues are adversarial, test them on their knowledge, are not receptive to their ideas, and generally make them feel like outsiders.

Bucking some male colleagues' pecking-order assumptions is particularly hard, according to Rabbi Susan Grossman of Genesis Agudas Achim in Tuckahoe, New York, because, "We're trained to listen to the male voice. You have to keep telling yourself you're an authority. It's very hard, but that's what it means to be a first in any field."

Convincing people to hire you can also be an obstacle. "I spent a lot of time arguing that I wouldn't do things differently from a man," says Dickstein, who had a difficult time finding a congregation even though she says she had more professional experience than most of her classmates. Eilberg recalls the search committee asking her if she would substitute "She" for "He" in prayers, introduce explicit feminist theology, and talk about women every week. "I now know the true answer is — I will talk *as a woman* every week," she says.

Gilbert Epstein, placement director for the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly, says the few women who had great trouble

getting congregations would have been no better off had they been men. He says these women appeared shy before search committees who were looking for someone "dynamic." Stanley Dreyfus, Epstein's counterpart at the Reform CCAR, says the women who struggled getting placed were, contrarily, rejected on the basis of being too belligerent. "There's no place in the rabbinate for people who are aggressively rebellious."

But blaming the women is a little like blaming the victim: Both placement directors acknowledge there are still pockets of resistance. "Large congregations will engage women, but not as the senior rabbi," says Epstein. "The educational director or assistant rabbi, those positions they could get." The reason? "Many congregations are reluctant to have women rabbis for fear of alienating their older members" — many of whom were originally affiliated with Orthodoxy, says Epstein.

Small congregations, on the other hand, sometimes hesitate to hire a woman because of the cost of paying for maternity leave. "Some [of the congregations] questioned the women about whether they anticipated having families and how soon," says Epstein. "They were worried she'd begin and then take off two months and they'd be without a rabbi." Maternity leave is "a heavy expenditure," says Dreyfus. "In a small synagogue, the rabbi's salary and benefits are the largest part of the budget."

But Rabbi Ellen Dreyfus, co-coordinator of the Women's Rabbinic Network (and Stanley Dreyfus's daughter-in-law), says the cost of hiring replacements for new mothers is no different from covering for rabbis on sabbatical or those stricken with illness. Part of the hiring problem may be that religious institutions are exempt from federal laws that bar businesses from discriminating on the basis of, among other things, gender. The Reform movement asks congregations seeking a rabbi to sign a statement agreeing not to exclude candidates on the grounds of gender. But, says Dreyfus, "It's a moral pledge. It doesn't mean a thing legally."

Once a woman rabbi manages to get a job, getting 'stuck' is commonplace. "There's a lack of upward mobility for women in the clergy," says Rabbi Jan Kaufman, a teacher at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Maryland. "When you apply for jobs [up the ladder], you don't get them. You don't get invited

Rabbi Roz Gold

to sit on committees. It's very subtle. No one will say anything to you directly."

The majority of women in solo slots head up the very smallest-sized congregations in the three movements which ordain women. Some argue that the absence of women in major pulpits has more to do with accruing seniority than anything else, and this is especially true for Conservative women, the most senior of whom was ordained only five years ago.

Unlike in other fields, job placement in the rabbinate is highly centralized. To hire a Conservative or Reform rabbi, congregations contact a central office which then determines eligible candidates by matching up the congregation's size with the rabbi's years of experience. "Women don't have seniority so they're automatically funneled to smaller congregations," says Stanley Urbas, chairman of the Joint Placement Commission of the Rabbinical Assembly, United Synagogue, and the JTS.

Another factor for Conservative women is that many entered the rabbinate after carving out careers in social work or teaching. "They are simply returning to related arms of those fields with the degree of rabbi to augment their professional standing," says Rabbi Debra Blank Reed, a doctoral student at JTS. "As more women come to rabbinical school straight out of college, more will probably go into the pulpit."

But that does not account for Reform women rabbis who have been in the field for nearly twenty years. Why are they still in small-sized temples?

Some of those who started out in large, anonymous congregations found they preferred the intimacy of a smaller setting. "I wasn't good in a big environment," says Rabbi Paula Winnig, who used to work at an 1,100-family temple and is now at the 200-family Temple Sholom in Queens, New York. "I don't like being a showpiece. [Here] I know the people and what they're going through. I can gear a sermon to a specific person." Hirsch, who is eligible for an even larger congregation next year, is not interested in one. "I don't want the impersonal contact. I don't want to meet the bar mitzvah family the week before the event."

The intense time-commitment of pulpit work is another deterrent to being in a large congregation, especially for women with young families. "It's always there, 24 hours a day, seven days a week," says Winnig. "The pulpit is extremely demanding in terms of hours and on one's emotions," says Reed. "Women in their mid-thirties are not attracted to that kind of work."

Whatever the size of the congregation, women rabbis are paid less than men, although more in comparison with women in the workforce at large. Last year, American women earned an average of 70 cents per male dollar, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Reform women rabbis earned on average slightly above 89 cents per male dollar, according to the CCAR's Task Force on Women. They begin their careers on near parity with their male colleagues — 94 cents per male dollar at the smallest congregations — but the difference widens as they advance — 81 cents per male dollar at mid-level congregations.

The reason, says Rabbi Roz Gold who heads the Task Force, is that women are not adept at negotiating for themselves. "Women are willing to make tradeoffs more easily. If they take a couple hours off in the middle of the day to be home when their kids come home from school, they might feel a little guilty about that" and not push for a raise.

Perhaps the most significant reason why women remain in small congregations may be attributed to what Gold describes as a different perception of the rabbinate. "Climbing up the ladder is not necessarily what we want." She regards the commonly asked question — "how big is your congregation" — as phallic. Rabbi Shira Milgrom, associate at the Jewish Community Center in White Plains, puts it another way: "When people think of prestigious rabbinic moments, they think of speaking before large congregations. Ultimately, what makes the difference is what happens between one person and another." L

Julie Goss has reported for Fortune *and* Money *Magazines.*

IN A CAFE

Performance Art by Sara Felder

That age-old question: What to have for breakfast – bagel or croissant?

Sara Felder, a juggler living in San Francisco, puts a new spin on the issue of our conflicted ethnic/cosmopolitan identities. Felder has performed this piece in theaters and clubs in San Francisco. It is part of a full-length work called "Beyond Brooklyn."

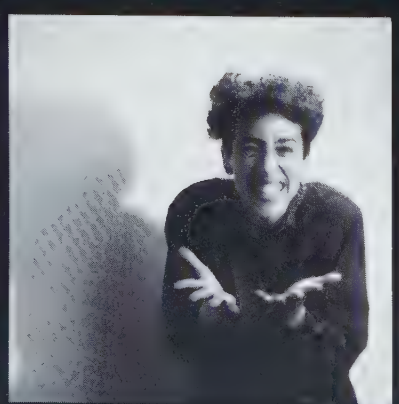
Then again, you can always skip breakfast and leave the hard questions for lunch....

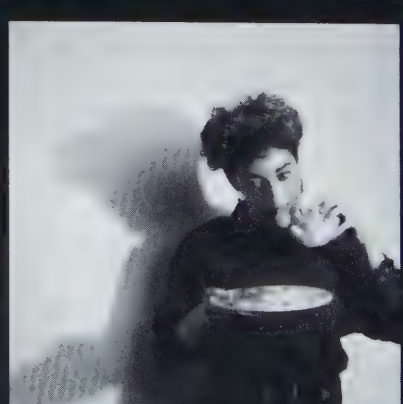
photographs by Reid S. Yalom

[Note: The narration to this piece is performed by Sara Felder in a neutral voice. The bagel speaks with an exaggerated Brooklyn accent, the croissant with an obviously fake French accent.]

Sara to audience: I guess it was about three weeks ago now, that I went into this cafe to get a bagel.
To counter person: "Good morning, I'd like a bagel please, . . ."
To audience: . . . when all of a sudden I noticed the tray of croissants sitting near the bagels.
To counter-person: "Actually, I changed my mind. I think I'd rather have a croissant."
To audience: But while he is getting the croissant I look over again at the bagels, and remember the bagel store on Brighton Beach Avenue where for fourteen cents you could have the most delicious bagel in the world. "Huh? . . . *(shaken from fantasy by the counter-person)*
To counter-person: . . . ohhhh, um, I want to have the bagel after all, thank you."

To audience: And then, while he is getting the bagel I look over at the croissants and I remember the first time I ever had one, when I moved to Berkeley from New York, and they just looked so good and even though I wasn't sure I was pronouncing it right, I said, "I'd like to have a croysant please . . ." Oh, but it was worth the embarrassment, because it was so soft and buttery and flaky.





The bagel speaks...

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The croissant interrupts...

To counter-person: "I'd like to have the croysant, I mean, croissant, please." *(looks over at the bagels)* "Actually, could you make it a bagel instead? Yeah, definitely, for here, with some cream cheese." *(looks over at the croissants)* "Look, did you cut it yet? Because I think I'd rather have the croissant. *(yelling)* Hey I don't care if there is a line forming behind me. You don't have to get indignant about it. I said I'd like to have a croissant, please! *(pause . . . softly)* Look, I don't mean to give you any trouble, just give me the bagel and I'll . . .
Responding to counter-person: "...oh, now that's a good idea. I could buy both the bagel and the croissant. And then I could give away the bagel. Right, or the croissant. One of the two."
To audience: And that's what I did. I bought both the bagel and the croissant.

She receives a bagel and a croissant on a plate.
She is about to bite the croissant.
Bagel (on plate): Hey Sara.
Sara looks around to see where voice is coming from.
Bagel: Over here.
Surprised, she places croissant in her right shoulder, the plate under her left armpit and focuses attention on the bagel, which is now in her left hand.
Bagel: Remember when Aunt Jean used to come visit and your mother used to go and buy bagels and lox?
Sara: Yeah. Those were really happy times, weren't they?
Bagel nods in agreement.

Sara laughs and is about to bite the bagel when the croissant on her left shoulder interrupts.

Croissant: Sara! Mon cherie! Sara, don't forget how you left New York to come to California to be an artiste! Real artistes eat les croissants. Remember Rodin! Remember Marcel! Don't forget what Getrude said, "A croissant is a croissant is a croissant."
As the croissant begins to talk, Sara transfers the bagel to her right armpit and the plate to her head and the croissant to her right hand.
Sara: Well, you can't argue with that can you? *(about to bite the croissant.)*

The bagel emerges from armpit to left hand. With the bagel in the left hand and the croissant in the right, a sort of puppet show begins.
Bagel: Now listen pal, this girl was weaned on the Atlantic Ocean, on the D train, and on bagels, man.
Croissant: This may be true my friend, but now she drives a car, she enjoys les hot tubs, and she spends her days writing grants!
Sara: Okay you two, separate, now, separate. *(They separate.)*
Bagel: Hey Sara, remember your grandmother, man.
Croissant: Sara, don't forget your art.

Sara to audience: I didn't know what to do. *(The objects fly into the air. They are being juggled.)* And then I realized this is not a philosophical issue at all. It is simply a question of which I am hungrier for at the moment. So I had a bite of the croissant and that was good and then I had some of the bagel and that was good . . . *(Eating and juggling at the same time . . . finally catches the two objects on the plate.)*

To audience: I feel so sick. I feel so full. I'm sick of this ancestry stuff *(throws bagel remains into audience)* and I'm sick of this present-day lifestyle crap *(throws croissant).* And yet I am so hungry *(begins doing balance and object manipulations with the plate),* I am so hungry to find the balance. *(Plate has turned into a mirror. She looks into the mirror. Touches her face. Fade-out.)* L

The plate becomes a mirror.

Requiem for Oma Berta

Andrea Sperling

It's not the absence of your lavender
scent or lack of your voice calling me
in German or your old woman's wrinkles
not there for my finger's trace, it's not that
all there is
is the official record: resident
of Heinsheim, widow
of Abraham, mother of Isaak.

It's not that they took you from the house
you came to as a bride fifty-five years ago,
took you far from Abraham's grave, took
house, goods, the family acres, took also
Fredericke, your daughter, two years after
she stood on the train platform waving
her handkerchief, smiling a little
for Inge and Siegfried as they leaned
—not waving, from the children's
transport en route to London.

It's not that you shivered
in Gurs, in the damp air of the Pyrennées
that first chill October; it's not that
your hip broken, nursed in a convent, you
missed the bribed rescue to Switzerland;
it's not that your gray hair slant pinned
in a bun, swirling blue polka-dot apron
over long black dress freeze into
one figure in one photo; not that you have
no grave. Oma, for me
you are terrible. For years I did not think
of your 1,390 days in the mud-floor barracks
for 60 women, daily cabbage leaf floating in
foul water, bread too hard
for false teeth nor your 1,390 nights under
one frayed blanket, bugs devouring you. Oma,
others dying or killing themselves, what kept
you alive after they loaded you
into a cattle truck in the last of France's
331 convoys, 77 in 1944, 32 in July, one month
short of eighty years old? Then for three days
jammed into the cattle train,
did you pray to die?

On the third of August I light
no candle for you, no candle in memory of
Berta Kahn Ottenhimer.
Oma, behind our house in the gazebo cooled
by grape leaves, the lemonade you poured
for our garden thirst
from the gray and blue earthen pitcher
flowed over the beading glass
into the small hollow of the white saucer.

Anneliese Wagner has published two books of poetry, Fish Magic *(Redding Ridge CT: Black Swan, 1989) and* Hand Work *(Upper Montclair, NJ: Saturday Press, 1983).*

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TEARS

A YOM KIPPUR STORY

by Elaine Kalman Naves

A CHICKEN SIMMERS IN JULIA'S SOUP POT, THE FIRST KOSHER CHICKEN SHE HAS EVER COOKED, THOUGH SHE IS NOT NEW TO COOKING. JULIA, HER EYES ON THE CLOCK, HER MIND ELSEWHERE, LIFTS LIDS OFF POTS CROWDING THE STOVE. VAPORS OF HONEYED CARROTS AND TOMATO SAUCE AND PARSLEYED POTATOES RISE IN HER FACE SHE RE-COVERS THE POTS, GLANCES AT HER WRISTWATCH. 4:25: DID SHE REMIND

Rob this morning that candlelighting was at 5:56? They ought to be sitting down in five minutes if they're to do justice to the five-course holiday meal she's prepared. Perhaps she forgot to mention candlelighting altogether. She's been so careful to avoid a repeat of last year's Yom Kippur battle with Rob that she may not have said anything at all.

Julia peers inside the soup pot, skimming golden islets of fat from the bubbling brew. She spears a drumstick with a knife. The meat flakes off easily. She blows on the morsel at the tip of the knife, pops it in her mouth. It tastes like – chicken. What had she expected? And what had possessed her, in the car yesterday, to swerve to the side of the road so abruptly that the cab behind her nearly hit her? She had certainly passed KOVACS'S KOSHER ("Marinated Spare Ribs", "B-B-Q Chickens") hundreds of times before without the impulse to stop.

Inside the shop, she pretended not to understand as Mr. and Mrs. Kovacs exchanged bursts of rapid Hungarian with each other. "Another one that gets religion before Yom Kippur, a once-a-year Jew," said the butcher.

"That makes seven in a row I've never seen before." Mrs. Kovacs made change. "*Chag sameach*," she smiled at Julia, baring a gold crown.

"*Koszonom szepen*", said Julia, in her best Hungarian. Thank you.

Sheila Shapira-Cortez

The doorbell rings and Julia feels relief suffuse through her. Rob is home in time. There will be no repeat of last year's histrionics, of a drama she well recalls though still does not fully understand:

"But what difference does it make if we eat five minutes later?" Rob, harried yet insouciant, had arrived at the last minute when Julia stood already poised by her grandmother's silver candlesticks. The table had been cleared of food. Rob had tried to sound reasonable through the undercurrent of irritation in his voice. "How could you not hold dinner for me? We can fast five minutes longer tomorrow. For God's sake, Julia, you never used to care about any of this stuff before!"

The child Julia, in her late thirties, cries as easily as when she was small. The tears trickled down her face as she lit the holiday candles. Not because of Rob's anger, but because of the very justness of his words. She had certainly never cared about this stuff before. It had always been her father's role to rush her mother, to rush all of them through the meal before *Kol Nidre*. Dressed in his best suit, his eyes blinking nervously behind his glasses, he used to eye his wristwatch while urging them to hurry. "Nine gulps of water at the end of the meal," he had intoned at the head of the table. "Nine gulps to finish with and you won't be thirsty tomorrow."

Daddy, Daddy.

Around the table in Julia's dining room the remnants of the feast have been cleared away. She stands behind the candles, her cheeks catching their glow, eyes suddenly radiant because Rob is home on time, has buried last year's hatchet, is resolved to please (humor?) her. Rob faces Julia; their children and her mother flank the table between them. On the nearby buffet spread with an embroidered runner, the *yahrzeit* candles in their metal encasements occasionally sputter. Rob, his brown head bare, stumbles hurriedly over the *kiddush*.

Yahrzeit candles. Julia remembers.

Thirty years ago, the end of the '50s. Their first year in Montreal, their first Yom Kippur in a strange land. She was eight. At the foot of the velveteen sofa a small table covered with a richly embroidered cloth. On it, six fat, metal-encased sputtering candles casting weird patterns on the ceiling, permeating the room with the smell of wax.

'It's all right,' Mummy whispers. 'He does this every Kol Nidre. It has nothing to do with you.'

Julia, the child, wakes with a start, staring in disoriented detachment at the flickering patterns in the half-light. Her mouth is dry, sour.

From the other side of the wall, a sound she can't decode. From her parents' room. A muffled repetitive noise, like a series of stifled, cut-off sneezes.

Her soles cling clammy to the rose-patterned linoleum as she pushes the door to their room open. The room fully lit. Like an owl she blinks in the painful brightness, trying to make sense of the image. On the far side of the bed, her father's bulky form doubled over – source of the muffled sobs. Her view now obscured. Mummy with dishevelled hair, in white nightie, bending over Julia, finger on her lips. Easing her out of the room.

"It's all right," Mummy whispers. "Go back to bed, Julia. He does this every year. Every *Kol Nidre* evening. Mourning his dead. . . .All his dead from the War. Once a year he does this. It has nothing to do with you."

Her father's tears for his dead: mother, father, brothers – all swallowed by Auschwitz. Aunts, uncles, cousins, college chums. A first wife whose picture hangs in the living room over the velveteen sofa. A little girl – her sister – who would be ten years older than Julia had she lived.

"It has nothing to do with you."

But her father had wept for the living as well. He had wept for Julia when she and Rob announced their engagement in 1967. Not the primordial sobs that had roused her on *Kol Nidre* night, just a misting of his glasses as in a fine drizzle. He had left the room in a hurry.

The summer of '67. Mad euphoria after the Six Day War. Summer of Expo. Mini skirts and clogs and oversized sunglasses. A queue snaking in front of the Israeli pavilion. Her hand in Rob's. The midday sun beating down. The shrill scream of seagulls. The odor of steamies and vinegar and fries.

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"What do you think about next summer?" Rob asks.

"In general?"

"No, in particular. June is the month for weddings."

"Is this a proposal or what?"

"Not 'or what.' I'll be graduating."

"Aren't you supposed to go down on your knees?"

"Only if you insist."

"I do."

He falls on one knee in the queue. "Dear lady," he begins.

She feels her face turn crimson. "Stop it." She tugs on his arm and he gets up, a bit sheepish.

"Well, what do you say?"

She squeezes his hand. "I'll tell you after this pavilion."

I can't marry you, Rob. It's like snuffing out life.

After the heat outside, the refreshing balm of a darkened room in the pavilion. A huge blow-up of men praying at the *kotel* — a soldier in fatigues, a Hasid with sidelocks, a man in a business suit. Return, oh Israel. *This* year in *Yerushalayim*.

Photos of eroded hills and barren plains, of malarial swamps and deserts. A painting of a ship overflowing with immigrants: visionaries and peasants, women and children, a people with luminous eyes locked in a dream.

And then a room, a chill somber room with only two artifacts: under glass, a small pair of scuffed lace-up shoes. A child's shoes. "Recovered from Auschwitz." On the wall behind, a photograph from the Warsaw ghetto. A little boy dressed in tatters, arms above his head in the gesture of surrender, before the guns of soldiers.

Julia flees the pavilion, Rob in tow, through the bright corridors of Israel reborn, of kibbutzniks taming the desert, of taped conversations in resurgent Hebrew, of the click-click of a slide show depicting sabras sharing their expertise with Africans. She flees, flees the sculptures and folk songs, the mosaics, the jewelry, the kosher restaurants.

Outside, in the sun, in the warmth, she faces him ragged of breath, her back to the pavilion, "I can't marry you, Rob."

It is like snuffing out life. Her life. His life.

"I'm going to Israel, " she says.

"Do you," he asks, and she detects the disbelief in his voice, and its note will echo and re-echo in her ears across decades, "do you want me to *convert*?"

"I don't know what I want. I can't survive here without you... Yes, yes, I want you to convert."

"Julia, I don't believe in that sort of thing."

"What *do* you believe in?"

"I believe in you — and in the love I have for you ... I believed," he is crying, too, "in the love I thought you had for me."

"I'm going to Israel," she says again.

But she did not go to Israel. Because at two that morning he phoned her. "I'll convert," he said. "Just so long as you know it's for you. Religion leaves me cold. I can't feel something I don't feel."

Well, as for religion — and she could have laughed hysterically but for fear of waking up her parents — it left her cold, too. Actually, it had left her parents cold as well. They had been reared in homes of rigid Orthodoxy on the Great Hungarian Plain. One of Julia's grandmothers wore a wig over her shaved scalp, the other was so pious she kept separate corners of her kitchen for meat and milk. But this did not stop Julia's father from shopping weekly at Hoffner's on St. Lawrence Boulevard for ham and head cheese and debrecziner *kolbasz*. As a boy he had trudged with his father two miles in mud to the nearest *minyan* at a rich landowner's farmstead every *Shabbes*. In Montreal he drove to temple once a year. On *Kol Nidre*.

Yet the Yom Kippur fast her parents observed with the selfsame stringency they had witnessed on the Hungarian prairies. Her father scoured the St. Lawrence fruit stalls in search of aromatic quinces for traditional quince compote for the festive dinner. He came home from work when the sun was still high in the sky. Her mother cooked chicken soup and honeyed carrots, tomato sauce and parsleyed potatoes. They lit *yahrzeit* candles and holiday candles. And then her father, who did not believe in God, who *davened* only on Yom Kippur, beckoned to them to array themselves before him in order of seniority. And he blessed her mother, Julia and her sister in the ancient words *his* father had once pronounced.

Daddy, Daddy.

In later years, after receiving her own blessing, Julia would lift her little girls up in turn to her father. He placed his broad hands on their golden heads, whispering "*Yevorechecho*," and she averted her eyes from his face, afraid of the tears she saw trickling from the corners of his eyes behind the glasses.

Rob declined to be blessed.

And when Julia's father died two years ago, Rob declined the invitation to give blessings of his own. He had kept his promise and converted, but religion still left him cold. And can you really become a link in someone else's chain?

Out in the kitchen, Julia's daughters begin to stack the dishwasher after the festive meal. The clatter of silverware and dishes jogs a stray memory for Julia. Earlier in the day, while searching for her holiday tablecloth in the buffet, her fingers had caught in a thicket of tassels and knots.

She begins to rummage now in the buffet among a jumble of napkins and placemats. Had she really hidden it here, hidden it from herself, two years ago when her mother passed it to her wordlessly? After some moments, she pulls it out in triumph. Her father's *tallis*.

Self-consciously she drapes it over her shoulders, then calls towards the kitchen.

"Girls!"

They troop into the dining room, eyeing her a bit warily in the exotic get-up.

Julia's eyes are moist. She spreads her arms and enfolds her daughters in a hug. The ancient words come back to her.

"*Yevarechecha Adonai V'Yishmirecha . . .*"

May God bless you and keep you. L

Elaine Kalman Naves was born in Budapest and now lives in Montreal where she writes both history and fiction.

America and I: Short Stories by American Jewish Women Writers
edited and with an introduction by Joyce Antler
Boston: Beacon Press, 1990
351 pp., $19.95

As the first historically based anthology of writings by American Jewish women, *America and I* reflects both the strengths and weaknesses of the historical approach to literature. Its 23 stories are divided into four sections: "From the Ghetto and Beyond: 1900-1929," "Troubles in the New World: 1930-1961," "Wider Glimpses: 1960-1979," and "The Past as Present: the 1980's."

The memories in this collection are rich, conflicting, complex and heart-rending: Cynthia Ozick's "The Shawl" (a concise encyclopedia of Jewish suffering); Anzia Yezierska's "America and I" (in which the eternal immigrant cries out, "I was in America, among the Americans, but not of them. . . ."); Rebecca Goldstein's chilling "The Legacy of Raizel Kaidish: A Story;" and Mary Antin's fairy tale, "Malinke's Atonement" (about a rebellious, starving girl's attempt to pass off a non-kosher chicken as kosher).

Some stories in this book are pure wonder: Tess Slesinger's tour de force, "Missis Flinders," that documents a woman's cab ride home from the hospital after a 1932 abortion, and Ivy Goodman's elliptical "Remnants: A Family Pattern," which takes a woman's traditional task of sewing and translates it into a collage of inescapable Jewish history: "You can never run away. They're behind me; they are with me. I am nearing them. They're my family."

Other welcome surprises are Edith Konecky's funny-sour voice that perfectly suits the garment district in "The Place" and Lesléa Newman's "A Letter to Harvey Milk" [which appeared in LILITH, Fall 1989], a striking example of Jewish pain reaching out into the world and teaching tolerance of homosexuality.

But perhaps as befits an historically based collection, the tone is more often somber, even grim. Stories are included that have solely historical relevance: Fannie Hurst's shrill soap-opera that is far too long, and the fragmentary stories, "Room in the World" and "Z'mira," each of which documents Jewish life, but does not transform it into art. Also missing: a sense of the pure joy of being both female and Jewish. In terms of literary forms, there is a dearth of stories that take risks with language, that are unafraid to leave ragged edges and to stir up trouble on all levels at once — philosophical, religious, sexual and linguistic.

The characters in these stories are predominantly passive on the outside, simmering on the inside. The women's focus is outward too — on husbands, families, neighborhoods. The stories of the 1980's are oddly bloodless, giving no sign of the agonizing struggles and ecstatic journeys into the re-vision of sacred texts and ancient taboos that symbolize this decade for so many Jewish women. Where are the stories about the contradictions of being a Jew and a feminist? Of women's different relationship with their God? Excellent stories along these themes do exist, and I wish they had been courageously included here.

America and I is a stable, important volume, its themes carved out clearly. As a professor of American Jewish literature, I welcome its emergence, sorely needed in the annals of American Jewish fiction.

— Ruth Knafo Setton

Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism From a Feminist Perspective
by Judith Plaskow
San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990
282 pp., $21.95 hardcover, $12.95 paperback

For the past twenty years, in living rooms, classrooms and meeting halls across the United States and Canada, Jewish women have been teaching one another that the tradition we hold so dear has included only half the story of our past, has given us incomplete direction for living in the present, and has embodied only fragments of a vision of the future. Such teaching has been based on a growing body of Jewish feminist writing.

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Standing Again at Sinai reaffirms the centrality of theological inquiry to a revisioning of Judaism and offers both an analysis of and a proposal for a new, inclusive theology of Judaism, a theology that questions both the essence and the expression of Judaism.

Plaskow examines the three traditional categories of Torah, God and Israel, examining how each concept has been interpreted in a way that either ignores, invalidates or denies women's experience. (In fact, given Plaskow's thesis, I would have liked to see even more examples of women's Torah, the history and literature that must become a part of the developing canon.) Plaskow opens up rich new areas for inquiry. She reviews the discussions of God-language that were the first step toward theological consciousness-raising for many, and proposes that we reconsider the power of using gendered language for God. Plaskow asserts that by using *only* gender-neutral terms like "Sovereign" or "Ruler" – instead of the clearly masculine "King" – we continue to picture God as a King. We need to use a "plurality of images," including female ones. Two final chapters of the book posit a theology of repair (*tikkun*) that embraces and reflects the full range of Jewish experience, including sexual experience.

In the most innovative section of the book, Plaskow calls for a recognition of the erotic energy that fuels the best efforts of our lives, and for a celebration of the erotic as a path to both holiness and wholeness. She writes that, in Judaism, sexual energy has been traditionally feared and denied as a God-given gift. In her discussion of the term *yetzer ha-ra* (usually translated as the evil impulse and used in reference to the sexual urge), she exposes the narrowness of traditional Jewish conceptions of healthy sexual expression that are based solely on male sexual experience and an androcentric interpretation of women's sexuality.

Plaskow suggests that a new theology of sexuality makes possible new visions of God as lover and companion, while simultaneously exposing the inherent prejudicial limitations of traditional notions of licit and illicit sexual behaviors. A new theology of sexuality recognizes the sanctity of all intense, essential relationships, both within and beyond the boundaries of heterosexual marriage. Plaskow writes, "when we touch that place in our lives where sexuality and spirituality come together. we touch our wholeness and the fullness of our power, and at the same time our connection with a power larger than ourselves."

– Sue Levi Elwell

Ernestine L. Rose, Women's Rights Pioneer, 2nd edition
by Yuri Suhl
New York: Biblio Press, 1990
340 pp., $15.95 hardcover,
$11.50 paperback

Ernestine L. Rose seems an unlikely person to find in the company of Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, Frederick Douglass, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Born in a Polish shtetl in 1810 (and daughter of an Orthodox rabbi), Rose was at the head and heart of U.S. social reform from the moment of her arrival in America. The year was 1836; it was the very beginning of the Woman's Rights and Free Thought movements.

Rose rejected Orthodoxy at the age of sixteen, while still in Europe. She travelled through Germany and France in the revolutionary atmosphere of the 1830's, supporting herself with her inventions of chemically treated papers (used to dispel kitchen odors).

Rose moved on to London, where she met her mentor and lifelong friend, utopian socialist Robert Owen. In these years she found a supportive husband in William Rose, and the couple journeyed to America. Here, as Suhl vividly recounts, Rose plunged into a world of lectures, legislative agitation, and battles lost and won in abolitionist circles, peace societies, and, always, women's rights conventions.

Suhl documents Rose's career closely, communicating the elation of the women's few hard-won successes, and the bitterness of the post-Civil War years when abolitionists and women suffragists, long companions in struggle, became bitterly divided over who should get the right to vote first: Black men or white women. Yet despite his devoted coverage of Rose's activities, Suhl's biography of necessity omits much. Rose was an intensely private person, leaving few letters and no diaries. The "Queen of the Platform" never spoke from notes, and few of her speeches have been completely preserved. This absence of Rose's own words in key scenes of the book is often frustrating.

The late Suhl wrote Rose's biography in 1959. Since then, his work has been updated and reclaimed by feminist scholars. In a new introduction to the book, Francoise Basch discusses the previously neglected subject of Rose's ethnicity, and in a new preface, Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall brings to the fore Rose's socialist feminist politics. The book as a whole attests to the persistence and continual evolution of the women's movement in this country.

– RK

Daddy's Home! Reflections of a Family Man
by Steven Schnur
New York: Crown Publishers, 1990
152 pp., $12.95

In *Daddy's Home!* Steven Schnur's subjects range from the intrigues of first love, age nine, to the trauma of washing machine repairs and house-buying, from Schnur's discovery of the joys of cooking to the problems of raising children under the threat of nuclear war. Some of his strongest material is not about his own parenting experience, but that of his maternal grandfather in Europe of the 1940's. It is here that we see most clearly Schnur's ultimate goal: the story of one father is not lost, but passed on to his family and to others.

Schnur's essays provide a refreshing perspective on the family. The vulnerability and caring he exhibits gives the lie yet again to stereotypical visions of fatherhood, and opens a place for discussion of men's roles in the family.

As a woman, however, I was disturbed by an unanswered question throughout the book: What is Steven's wife Nancie doing? Home full-time with three preschool children (including twin infants), what is she feeling? Oddly, Nancy is a hazy, absent figure in this book of cogent and moving portraits. Where is a picture of *co*-parenting or of the spousal relationship?

Schnur, in writing the book, says he decided "not to try to tell my life story, but rather to concentrate on those kernels of intense feeling that so animate my life – the moments of sudden incandescence that fatherhood makes almost commonplace." As a collection of such moments, *Daddy's Home!* is a beautifully written and warm account of one man's experiences.

– RK

The Classic Tales, 4,000 Years of Jewish Lore
by Ellen Frankel
Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1989
659 pp., $60

In her selection and retelling of 300 "classic" tales, Ellen Frankel has achieved some desirable diversity. Like folktales in many non-Jewish traditions, these stories blend realism with the fantastic, conjuring magical remedies for ill fortune, poverty, marriage gone awry, and the pious gone astray. Sections include "In the Beginning," "In the Lands of the Diaspora," "The Hasidic Period," and "Tales of Elijah the Prophet." Quite an undertaking!

Running one-third of a page to six pages in length, these tales reveal the tellers' preoccupations with destiny, wisdom, sin, atonement, the desirability of riches, and the inability of riches to substitute for enduring values. A number of stories dramatize the tribulations of being poor or childless, facing one's own or a beloved's death, or disobeying a sage.

Frankel says that she was impelled to give Jewish children a wider range of Jewish tradition through "voices that haven't been heard" — that is, female voices. She also has deliberately omitted misogynist tales.

In the tale "Lilith," where Lilith prowls through the night seeking to harm newborn babies, Frankel tinkers with the classic version by giving Lilith, "compassion for her sister creatures . . . the mothers of these innocent babies." It would have been useful, however, to know precisely what changes Frankel has made. Some readers may prefer to learn how, originally, Jewish tradition construed women's roles, rather than to revel in a revisionist version, despite its attraction.

The images in these tales, though rare, are splendid. ". . . he saw something flowing red, fluttering like a great wing. It was the beast's heart, and when he drew closer, Israel saw that it was filled with immeasurable sadness and pain" [from "The Werewolf"]. Or, "And sure enough, there in the red soup floated the shimmering moon, like a thick slice of onion" [from "Chelm Captures the Moon"]. Humor is in short supply, yet welcome, as in "The Unpaid Pledge" and "The Gentile's Impatience," both of which teach correct behavior.

Too often the title gives away the story, depriving the reader of the pleasure of discovering what happens even before she has begun the tale. For example, the title "The Bride Who Saved Her Husband from the Angel of Death" gives us the denouement at the outset.

Six indexes (including "Holidays," "Symbols" and "Character Types") and a list of sources and glossary are excellent. The collection Frankel has amassed, evidently with much labor and care, is impressive. "The basic impulse of the Jewish tale," she writes, is "to make sense out of the things that happen to us, as individuals and as a people."

Who's to argue?

— Carole L. Glickfeld

Mothers
by Gloria Goldreich
Boston: Little, Brown
439 pp., $18.95

In this fictionalized version of the Mary Beth Whitehead story, Nina and David Roth visit the Museum of the Holocaust in Israel where David becomes obsessed, as never before, with the notion of Jewish loss. Nina is unable to bear children.

Enter Stacey Cosgrove, a bright and selfless mother of three whose obstetrician happens to be David's brother. The money she could earn through surrogate-mothering could fulfill her family's dream to relocate to California. Introductions are made, plots and waist thicken. The good will between the Roths and the Cosgroves has included, amazingly, an above-board one night stand for David and Stacey (no cold, artificial insemination for these virtuous characters). Finally, though, a tragedy calls for unexpected, Solomonic consolations.

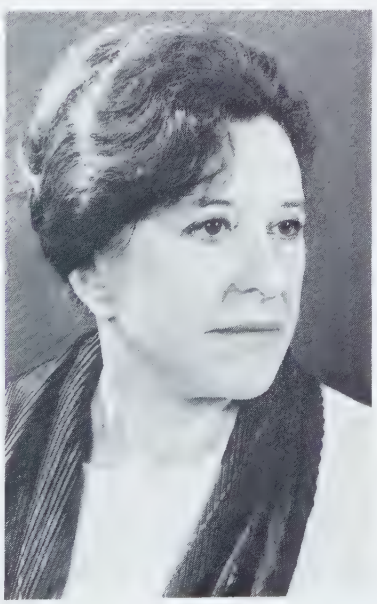
A saccharine but sensitive story unfolds about what are, after all, important issues: the parenting drives of men and women, relationships, the dark realities of Jewish continuity. An easy read.

— Ruth Schnur

Sue Levi Elwell is a Los Angeles-area rabbi. Carole L. Glickfeld is writer-in-residence at Interlochen Arts Academy. Ruth Schnur is an avid reader who lives in Southern New Jersey. Ruth Knafo Setton teaches English at Lafayette College.

Prophet *by Shulamith Hareven*

AUTHOR OF THE MIRACLE HATER



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A Precious Moment in Chile

It was *Erev Shabbat* (Friday evening) April 28, 1989 in Santiago, Chile, and I laughed with Jenny and Pamela, the first to arrive at my sublet apartment, as we wondered if any of their friends would actually show up! I had invited a handful of Jewish university women to a Rosh Chodesh (New Moon) celebration and while preparing cheese, apricot nectar and the bread as closely resembling challah as I could find, I wondered if my sudden impulse to organize this meeting would prove worthwhile. There was no time to schedule a follow-up gathering; I was to leave for Bolivia in five days.

A knock on the door and the contagious smiles of three more late Latinas made the hour unimportant. There was talk about the work overload at the university, about the Camp Ramah newsletter overdue for publication and some gossip on current relationships. After a while I asked permission to explain why I had brought these women together.

As a Jewish woman from the Northeast of the United States, a place where feminism and Jewish community are far more visible than in Santiago, I wanted to share some of my experience with these new dear friends of mine. Their individual searches for information beyond the borders of their "preciosa" yet isolated land, and each woman's striving for personal growth, provided fertile ground for this Rosh Chodesh meeting.

After four months in the country, including three weeks at Chile's Camp Ramah (affiliated with the Jewish camps of the same name in this country), I was familiar with many of the constraints on my female friends. Having grown up under the harsh regime of General Augusto Pinochet, they, like their male counterparts, had been taught to keep ideas to themselves, to act and speak cautiously, to comply with the system. And the system was not only that of a political dictatorship, but of a Latin American society which has given these women a set of traditions and boundaries within which to safely operate. Finally, these young women were Jewish. Their community expected them to succeed academically, to marry as early as possible and to accept the traditions of the intimate Jewish community (15,000 to 20,000 in Chile, concentrated in Santiago).

I suggested to the women seated around the small table that because of these societal pressures, which they had individually shared with me in many conversations, it could be positive to meet as a group of women outside the activities of the male/female group of Jewish university cohorts. A friendly, enthusiastic bunch of men and women had been at my apartment only nine days previously for a Passover seder, organized mainly by Roberto, now a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. The university group, made up of past and present Ramah counselors and their friends, is the pride and joy of their synagogue, La Communidad Sepharadi de Santiago. These young people bring life to their Jewish heritage, leading services once a month, and meeting for *Onegei Shabbat* (Sabbath parties) occasionally.

Yet I had noticed the constant flirting, the youthful self-consciousness of the men and women, all hoping to find a partner in a very small community. "So I thought maybe you would enjoy meeting as women . . . ." I watched their faces. How would they react? Would my *Gringa* ideas be resented? Would they see me as I felt some of their parents did, as a 'radical feminist?'

I continued, in my far from perfect Spanish, to tell them stories of one Jewish women's group in which I had participated for a year, the Rosh Chodesh group of Montpelier, Vermont. Through the Beth Jacob Synagogue, women meet on the Sunday closest to the new moon to speak about their experiences of the previous month and to engage in some activity relating to Jewish women.

So with that as our model for the night, I began reflecting on my month in Santiago, how I felt as I prepared to leave Chile, a country with whose people and land I had fallen in love. And we proceeded around the circle, one by one. Only when my introduction was over did I realize the energy and excitement in their voices. I sat back to witness the spontaneous sharing of feelings and hopes among friends.

One woman spoke of her growing awareness of challenges confronting women, and the need to nurture women's solidarity in the traditional confines of the Jewish community. Another spoke of the sweetness of this opportunity, to meet in the apartment of a young woman who was able to live economically independent of her parents. One woman spoke of her imminent *aliyah* (immigration to Israel), another of the burden of family problems over the past months. When they left into the quiet, damp night I felt optimistic and satisfied. The few who had attended had responded so eagerly. The seeds were planted, but would they sprout?

I received some news of the group during my travels in Bolivia and Ecuador, but only when one of the women present at that first meeting, Cecilia, came to visit the States in January 1990 did I get a full progress report. Cecilia told me that the group had met a few times. They had once gone away to the beach for an apparently unforgettable Shabbat of sun and sisterhood. Ceci estimated there were fifteen reliable participants, and others who still needed encouragement. The group had articulated its objectives: to reflect on the previous month, using and exploring Rosh Chodesh as a cycle natural to women, and to provide a supportive atmosphere and a place to learn more about Judaism.

Cecilia and I set to work, to take full advantage of her months here. We attended services at Conservative, egalitarian, and Reconstructionist synagogues, and Cecilia spent hours at the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary. We had time to speak to one Hadassah group in Teaneck, New Jersey, which gave the gift of *Lilith* Magazine to this as yet unnamed group of vibrant Jewish Santiaginas.

So to our friends in Santiago who can read these words in their own *Lilith* Magazine: *Estamos pensando en ustedes*. We are thinking of you and wish you success and strength.

Note: If you are interested in learning more about this group contact the author through Lilith. You are also encouraged to write letters to the group care of the author with your ideas, stories or dates of arrival to Chile for a visit.

— Hilary Marcus

KOL ISHAH

continued from page 6

The Cantors Assembly Convention: A Spy Story

I attended my first Cantors Assembly convention in the Catskills this May with some trepidation. I knew that the group would be primarily composed of men; I also knew that the Assembly (composed mainly of Conservative cantors) does not admit women as members, though women are free to attend meetings. Aware that a vote was to be taken on the issue during the convention, I wanted to know more about the reasoning behind this exclusion.

The atmosphere of this cantors' gathering was beautiful, and often overwhelming. Walking to and from my room several times a day, past the rows of doors with their white plastic *mezuzot*, I enjoyed the muffled cantors' voices warbling in their own rooms. It was like a continual dose of nostalgia for me, having been raised on those mournful, melismatic sounds.

Some of the finest voices heard at the conference were women's, yet there was nothing "hazzonish" [cantor-like] about their sound. The only music women were allowed to sing at the conference was concert music, which of course allows opponents of women cantors to point out that women cannot sound like cantors! Not all of the concert music was modern, but it was all set and composed, not improvised. Traditional cantorial music encourages self-expression through long improvised passages; after a day of such wonderful music, the concert music — sung by women — came across as cold and rigid.

An undercurrent of suspense built towards the second day, when the executive council was to vote on the admission of women to the Assembly. This was listed as a closed session, for "members and wives only." The fact that women non-members can only be admitted if they are married to a member says volumes about the traditional, almost biblical, attitudes of the assembly.

The upcoming vote was the hot topic at breakfast that day. I sat at a table consisting entirely of the older generation, women and men. The man next to me was upset that women had been voted down the previous two years; he felt it was time for a change and was angry at men who resisted it. He told me to question a man sitting across from me, who was a vocal opponent of women. So I engaged in the following "argument for the sake of heaven:"

"Why do you object to women being cantors?"

"Women since after biblical times have been kept down, you see . . ."

"So does this mean they should continue to be kept down?"

"Well, when I came to this country and started to be a hazzan, I felt inadequate. I remember my teacher, back in the Old Country, in his *peos* (sideburns) and long coat. I wasn't *frum* (strictly observant), and it didn't feel right . . ."

"But times change, and you *did* become a hazzan!"

"Well, yes, but I'm saying it just didn't feel right. Just as it doesn't feel right for women." (His wife nodded in assent, adding that if she could vote, she would abstain.)

I was very curious to hear what sort of arguments would be brought against admission of women. I could not get past the guard at the door, who assured me that no non-members were being admitted. I did not give up that easily. I quietly entered the room adjacent to the meeting, from another side, where I could hear the proceedings through the speaker. I scrunched into a corner and smugly set myself up with a note pad.

But soon after, someone entered the room and informed me that it was "not available." I moved to a chair outside in the sun, near an open door, where I could still hear some of the proceedings. The minute one of the "guards" saw me there, he shut the door. I then moved to the hallway outside the roller skating rink, by another door, from where I could once again hear something. As soon as I was seen, that door was also shut.

By the end of this game, I was reduced to hiding out in the equipment room and scribbling notes in the dark. When I heard two men go by looking for me, I decided not to give them the satisfaction of their own importance, and I walked up the hill behind the hotel, enjoying my first sunlight in two days and the spring blossoms.

This year, for the third time the vote once again was against admitting women. Though 68 out of 100 members voted in favor of admitting women, this fell 12 votes short of the required two-thirds majority.

I had been able to hear the assembly president, Robert Kieval of Rockville, Maryland, who has been a tireless supporter of admitting women, make his introductory plea. Kieval begged his colleagues to resolve this issue, because too much time and energy are being spent on it. He tried to make it as palatable as possible: only women graduates of the institute would be admitted, and they would not be able to lead any services at the conventions until at least 1994, when a vote would be taken on that issue.

Apparently no arguments were heard on either side, since a majority voted against hearing arguments. The assumption was that the resolution to admit women

Women Cantors Hold Their Own Convention

"I remember coming home after my first workshop," recalls Elie Schaeffer of the Women Cantor's Network (WCN) convention. "I was so high, I had a feeling that all of my sisters around the world were joined in hand, all doing the same thing."

The network, unlike other cantor's associations, has no eligibility requirements, no gender divisions and no formal hierarchy. It is a group dedicated, in the words of WCN member Elizabeth Bolton, to "helping to break down the isolation of women cantors not serving on the Southwest or Northeast coasts."

Participants gather each year in June to share their voices and their concerns. In workshops they discuss ways to encourage recognition of women cantors, and pool information on contract negotiations and other common financial concerns. The convention closes each year with participants extending the warmth of their convention to the public in a concert of new and old music.

The WCN, founded in 1982, now has a membership of over 100 women cantors, soloists, rabbis and cantorial students, as well as a number of contributing supporters, both male and female. For many women cantors, the networking provided by the conference sustains them through the year. "The real support comes when you're home and you're the only one in your city," says Marsha Fenson of Milwaukee. "It's very nice to know there's someone to speak to."

For membership information in the Women Cantor's Network, contact Penny Aronson, 3330 Dogwood Dr., Willow Grove, PA 19190.

— Lisa Klug

"SPUNKY WOMEN"

The LILITH Mother's Day "spunky women" column has been dedicated by Vivian Leith of Minneapolis in memory of her mother, Lillian Arkin Schwartz of Winnipeg, Manitoba. "My mother had indomitable spirit," says Leith, "spunky does not begin to describe the depth of her intellect and courage. She was a woman of great determination and strength of character."

Lillian Schwartz (1908-1986) was an innovator, a woman willing to follow her own path doing what few women of her generation did. At the age of 19, she hitchhiked across Canada with a girlfriend. Later she became the first woman to graduate from the University of Manitoba Law School. Limited by severe asthma, she nevertheless wrote children's books, was a sculptor, practiced law and successfully played the stock market.

The youngest child and only girl in a family of boys, Lillian was left to her own devices. "Since there were no rules for her," says Leith, "she made her own." She built a modern house when no one else did, entered a male profession when no one else did and played the stock market "her own way."

Leith is honoring her legacy.

Other spunky women honored with LILITH's Mother's Day cards by daughters, mothers, and others:

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Pesi Zelikovic

would automatically pass this year. There is now talk of a vote-by-mail, since many members were absent and some conservative areas of the US and Canada were disproportionately represented. Based on several conversations I had with hazzanim at the convention, I believe most hazzanim are embarrassed at their colleagues' backward attitudes, and would fully welcome women in the assembly.

To allow women to attend the Cantors Institute, the cantorial training program of the Jewish Theological Seminary, for five years, be invested as hazzanim, and serve Conservative congregations, but not to admit them as members of the professional organization of hazzanim is as absurd as it is discriminatory. With attitudes so rooted in the past, including those towards women, no wonder the institute has trouble attracting young students!

— Helen Leneman

Rediscovering and Creating a Women's Literature

"The story of Bruria [second century women renown for her scholarship] should be read by women as the *haggada* is read during Passover," said the Israeli novelist Ruth Almog in a moving presentation at a conference on "Gender and Text" at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York in June.

While Israeli men write about "reality," politics, ideology, "we write about love, intimacy, family," and are made to feel trivial, continued Almog. This is part of the social-historical perception of the writer as prophet in Israeli culture. The collective supercedes the individual, and the representation of the collective is expected of the writer.

"I did not live up to this expectation until my last novel, *Dangling Roots*, which I consider a political, 'male' novel," Almog said with some regret.

Chava Rosenfarb, a Yiddish novelist and Holocaust survivor, claimed in her address that the only narrative tradition she could call her own was her foremother's oral literature: lullabies, folk tales, *Tsena U'Rena*. Yiddish women writers have unique transitions to make from oral storyteller to novelist.

It became clear to the hundred or so attendees at the conference that while Israeli women writers are struggling to find their authentic voices, create models and expand the borders of traditional literature in order to include the newly found voice of "silent humanity," Yiddish women authors, an almost totally extinct species, must be rediscovered and included in the male-oriented canon. The conference brought to the front several Yiddish poets, such as Anna Margolin and Tsilya Drapkin, and some extraordinary women journalists of the Yiddish press.

The portrayal of both male and female protagonists by Israeli male authors was another issue discussed at the conference.

"Is English competing as the universal language of the Jews?" asked Anita Norich in her closing remarks, "and if so, should it not be included in this conference?"

While feminist literary criticism in general literature is by now a strong and viable approach, this conference broke new ground in the feminist consideration of Jewish literature. The fifteen papers offered in the conference will be published soon.

— Zvia Ginor

What Soviet Anti-Semitism Looks Like Now

The poster shows a caricatured Israeli soldier marching over the bodies of dead and mutilated Lebanese. In one hand, the soldier carries a bloody axe; in the other, he waves an American-made missile. Walking alongside him, with an arm draped around the soldier's shoulder, is a spectral Adolf Hitler. Hitler's arm is raised in a salute. The two figures together form a swastika.

The 1982 poster is part of an exhibit of anti-American and anti-Semitic propaganda covering the years from 1982 to the present. The largest part of the exhibit, which former Soviet refusenik Evgeny Lein collected piece by piece from Leningrad bookstores, was brought to the United States by Marian Scheuer Sofaer, a Washington attorney.

Sofaer contacted others upon her return to the US and began work on the exhibit. Since then, the exhibit has been shown at the Parsons School of Design in New York City and in the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington.

While the bulk of the material in the exhibit is from the years 1982 to 1987 (entitled "Before the Thaw"), some of the most disturbing is from 1990, according to Dr. Yana Feith, compiler of the most recent material.

"Through 1987, there was an intense [anti-Western and anti-Semitic] propaganda effort," says Feith, a physician by training. "Now we are seeing the reflection of that barrage in the grassroots movements, in the political institutions, and in the intellectualized part of Soviet society."

Feith points for illustration to another picture in the exhibit. This one depicts ape-like, skull-capped figures gloating over ruined churches, barbed wire and drowned bodies. The figures are shielded by an umbrella inscribed with the names of ostensibly pro-Western organizations. The scene, suffused in blood-red, appeared in a January 1990 issue of *Molodaya Gvardia*, the magazine of *Komsomol*, which is a part of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth Organization. The magazine, says Feith, has a circulation of 650,000.

The combination of anti-Semitic and anti-American propaganda in one exhibit is an especially meaningful one, according to Sofaer. "We felt non-Jews could relate, could understand the anti-Semitism when they saw it in context of the anti-Americanism."

The exhibit of anti-Semitic and anti-American propaganda is available for travel. For further information, contact Marian Scheuer Sofaer at 4801 Massachusetts Ave. NW #400, Washington, D.C. 20016, (202)895-1666, or call Dr. Yana Feith at (301)320-2476.

— RK

Jewish Singles Introductions Go Global

Jewish mothers, grandmothers and doting aunts who have been despairing that the eligible bachelors in their family would ever meet "Ms. Right" can now take heart. Susie Carter, editor and co-publisher with her husband Dave of the magazine *AlaskaMen USA*, is about to do for Jewish men what she's been doing for the men of Alaska and some other global eligibles. She's been touring the country to make local contacts and is about to start her newest edition, *JewishMen* (one word, according to the magazine's format), *a magazine for women*.

Asked why she had specifically targeted Jewish men for her newest venture, Carter said, "Tell all the Jewish mothers to send me their sons, and we'll get them married! We've test-marketed *JewishMen* in a previous issue, and it turned out to be the most popular edition of all our magazines."

Although Carter and her family are Mormons, she discovered during a three-year residence in Berlin that she has Jewish roots through two of her great-grandmothers, and that one great-grandmother's aunt had married a Native American named Oshtar, "which is spelled almost like Esther. Our children know all about their Jewish ancestry. We don't keep it under wraps. No way!"

"Having found that out, I started getting letters from Jewish mothers asking me to help them, telling me they had either a son or a daughter who couldn't find anyone of their age or of the Jewish faith. They were all saying, 'Please help me.' So I realized there was a need for that in *JewishMen*."

"I'm really not a matchmaker," Carter claims. "The magazine is targeted toward women. We're not waiting for the men to help us, but what we're doing is based on women helping each other. We're networking with women throughout the entire world to find eligible men through our magazine."

Carter doesn't accept "just anybody" in the magazine. A female friend or relative has to submit the candidate's name to Carter, starting a process involving filling out a questionnaire and then obtaining the man's permission to appear in the glossy, illustrated magazine. Staff writers write up the actual descriptive material.

The latest issue of the three-year-old *AlaskaMen USA* publication features 98 pages, complete with a centerfold, and descriptive biographies and photos, two per page, of attractive, mostly young men in "action-shots," either fishing, hunting, or sailing, against the picturesque Alaskan background.

Carter was recently on the Joan Rivers show. Half-jokingly, she says, "Joan wants me to try to find her a husband. You'd be surprised how many famous women contact me in Alaska. It's kind of sad because they're so isolated."

Carter, who ran a daycare center for 25 years in California before relocating to Anchorage several years ago, has 9 children from her two marriages. She is nothing if not peripatetic. Carter has just returned from England, where she is planning to start up an *AlaskaMen UK* edition and is also going to Hawaii to start an *IslandMen* edition.

Carter may be reached by calling (907) 522-1492 or (900) 860-9294, or by writing to AlaskaMen USA/201 Danner St., Suite 100/Anchorage, Alaska 99518.

— Gladys Damon

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Hudson Valley Judaic Arts Festival, March 9 & 10, 1991, Nyack, N.Y. Fundraiser for resettlement of Soviet Jews. For exhibitor information call Ronni (914) 425-3119.

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Our Lives, Circa 1919

translated by Maxine Schwartz Seller

In 1919, the *Jewish Daily Forward* ran a series on its woman's page called "Seven Stages in the Life of a Woman." Written by a man (pen name: Lead Pencil), it represents — ostensibly — the life of the Yiddish-speaking Eastern European immigrant woman.

Courtesy New York Public Library

At sixteen, women are the amusement for the true public — men. Men pay for tickets and woman is the actor.

The schoolgirl becomes drunk from the first compliment paid her as a woman. At sixteen, she is a princess. She becomes a dreamer. All is hers and all is made for her. Only a villain, a murderer, would pull the veil away from her false world and show her the drab path that awaits her.

She becomes twenty-five. The dream disappears from her eyes, from her face, from her whole body. The long-awaited husband becomes a hard, heavy question.

When she was sixteen (and first entered the sweatshop) it was an honor to get up early and go to work by streetcar with grown-up people. But now work is a noose around her young life, the closeness of the streetcar is a hell, the shop is hard penal labor.

The year thirty threatens like a brute, like a malicious ghost. Fear takes her to a matchmaker, and from all her early dreams comes a small, poor business deal: She becomes the bride of a stranger, a foreign boy, a man whom she does not know.

Suddenly a man is working to support her. An unknown man is so close to her, closer than her mother, than her father. She is away from the authority of the foreman in the shop, but she is under the authority of her husband. She begins to live not for herself but for him. Instead of the machine in the shop, there are the pots in the oven. Soon she is not saying or thinking her own thoughts, only his. She has stopped belonging to herself.

The coming of a baby gives the young mother a purpose to her life. Everything was only an introduction to this goal.

Between husband and wife can come mistrust, duplicity — but not between father and mother. Life stands on a secure basis. She has a child, a child, and her husband is a father, a more loving and close person with a thousand ties to the home, their little garden of Eden.

The glow has disappeared. She has another child and another and another. She has only anguish and fear. The beautiful name of mother is no more than a cover for the work of the woman who is in truth a maid, a baby nurse, and an incubator to bring new people into the world.

She doctors herself and applies all shameful remedies so no life will come. She is alone in the struggle. She turns against herself with a knife so that life won't come. She strikes, ready to lose her own life.

She loses her attractiveness; her husband remains almost the same. He meets new people, goes to lectures and meetings. He is like a bird. Every year he flies away further and higher.

She gives her whole spirit to her children. They fly away also. She clings to her house, even though it is her prison. She doesn't give her husband his freedom, for in his freedom is her first breath enslaved.

Every time she takes a child's jacket in her hand she feels a burst of happiness, but how imprisoned she is by those jackets. She has lived so little. Her youth and men call out to her, battle with the mother in her — the mother wins.

Every gray hair is like *Tisha B'Av.* Looking for a long time in the mirror, she cannot determine how she looks. Sometimes she seems young and pleasing, sometimes she feels heavy and dissatisfied with herself, with everyone, with the whole world.

She is thirty-two years old. She has made peace with the middle years like a calf tied up with ropes.

The fiftieth year draws near. She thinks: If the past were now, I would know how to take advantage of it.

The daughters take all their friends to her for advice about their male acquaintances. At night, when her children sleep, she looks at them as if they were babies. Her children have brought her peace, sunny days of love.

She does not feel old. On the contrary, she has never had as much zest for living or felt as much youth as now. She will not miss a banquet, a wedding, a theatre performance.

All is taken care of; the egoism she had as a young girl is coming back. She is a woman by the handle of life's door. This makes life dear and she wants to grab more and more of it.

If she were alone now — without children, without grandchildren, without a husband — she would feel like a young girl. She would fly on wings.

The hair becomes gray, grayer, white. L

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